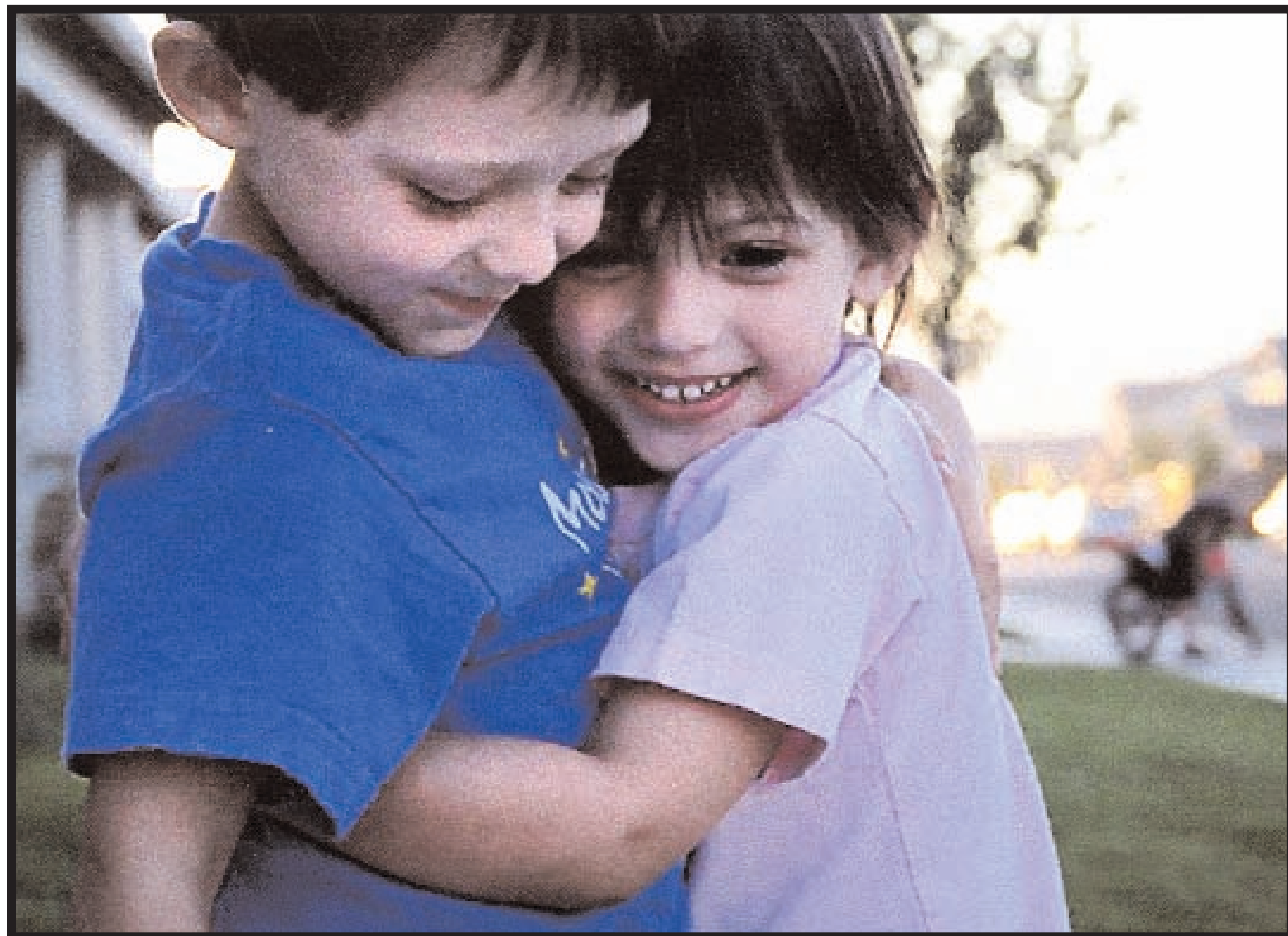


They're two-of-a-kind



A real package deal

Twins Trinity and Christian stand in front of a friend's house in this image taken by student photographer Breanne Ellis. Breanne noted that the twins had just returned from a trip to Las Vegas in October and were wearing shirts that said the same thing, and she wanted to capture their closeness. The image earned Breanne an honorable mention in the photo-journalism category of The Reporter's Campus Star competition. Breanne was a sophomore at Buckingham Charter Magnet High School in Vacaville when the picture was taken.

A different way to see the world

By Laura Turpen
Honorable Mention, Feature Writing
Division: 7-8

Imagine that every time you hear a door slam, you taste buttered popcorn or you are totally convinced that Thursdays are blue or that the number nine is quiet and shy. These are not weird or abnormal coincidences, these are experiences that scientists refer to as a condition called "synesthesia."

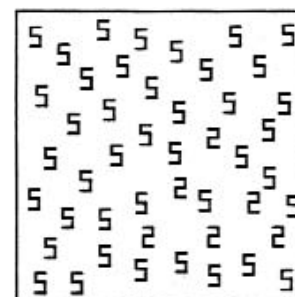
Synesthesia comes from the Greek words "syn" or "union" and "aesthesia" or "sensation." Basically this means, "joined perception." Synesthesia can involve any of the senses, but the most common form is when you see colored numbers and letters that appear to an average person as black and white. For example, if you have synesthesia, the letter "A" might appear to be red. It is unknown the exact number of people who have synesthesia, since most don't realize they do.

Studies have shown that the number of people who have it range from 1 in 23 people to 1 in 200. Needless to say, synesthesia is an unusual and statistically rare condition. Neuroscientists believe it is caused by "cross-wiring" of the parts of your brain that control the senses. The popular theory is that everyone is born with this perception as an infant, but as we mature, the connections are "pruned" away.

Synesthetes (people with synesthesia) tend to be women (reasons unknown), predominantly left-handed, neurologically normal, and artistically or musically talented. Synesthesia seems to be a dominant trait among family members. Scientists who study genes and DNA believe that synesthesia may run on the X chromosome.

Although synesthetes disagree on most of their perceptions, (one man sees "4" as green while another thinks it is blue) they do all have things in common. All synesthesia perceptions are:

- Involuntary (meaning they don't think about it, it just happens)
- Memorable (makes it easy to remember names, spelling, and dates)
- Emotional (people feel happy and content; but going through a time of extreme stress or tragedy might take away the sensations)
- Projected color (seeing it outside the body even with your eyes closed) Synesthesia affects more people than you might think. If you think you have synesthesia, try this test: Look at this picture ... what do you see?



If you are like me, all you see is a bunch of fives. Look a little longer and you might spot a couple two's. A synesthete will immediately see triangle of different colored twos among the fives in the bottom right hand corner.

The reason I picked this topic for my essay (not only because I think that it is way cool) is that I believe that studying this interesting condition may help us understand more about our brain and how we perceive our world.

The author is an eighth-grader in Mary Iannarelli's classroom at Notre Dame School in Vacaville.

Students say women should be responsible

By Sarah Vucurevich and Peter Fournier
2nd place, Feature Writing
Division: High School

Abortion is always a hot topic in politics. The 2006 mid-term elections were no exception with California having a proposition on the ballot regarding teens' access to abortion. If it had passed, it would have required any girl younger than 18 to have parental consent before having an abortion. The initiative failed 47 percent to 52 percent.

Abortion has been legal in the United States for more than 30 years — since the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision. While that decision made abortion legal, it did not stop the debate — or efforts to curb or outlaw it. And while there are many Americans who oppose abortion, there are many others who view whether to carry a child a matter of individual choice.

Rodriguez High School student views on abortion mirror those of the country. Some are pro-life, meaning they oppose abortion. Others are pro-choice, meaning they believe women should have the right to choose whether to have an abortion.

"I don't think they should kill their



P. Fournier

babies. They took the time to make it. Why kill it?" asked senior Munireh Salah.

Junior Corrine Westhauer disagrees. "It's the woman's decision. She can do what she wants to."

"I'm not for or against it," says senior Mike Vallejo, who is one of a number of students who expressed mixed feelings about the subject.

"It is up to the woman to choose. She chose to have sex, chose whether or not to use protection. So she should choose whether or not she wants to have a kid in the country who could end up having bad lives."

"There's no point in bringing a kid into a family if they're not going to take care of it," Max Pelletier says. Senior Kelsey Woodhouse agrees.

"I think if the child's going to be born into a bad family, then it shouldn't be born at all. It's the mother's decision. It shouldn't affect anyone else."

Senior Patrick O'Reilly said "Pregnancy could ruin someone's life if it isn't the right time."

Pro-life advocates believe the baby is alive from the moment of conception.

"It's wrong, man. It's a human being right there," says senior Trung Vo.

Senior Kepalina Castro has very strong feelings against abortion. "I believe that if a girl is mature enough to have sex, she should be mature enough to accept the consequences associated with it. That or use protection such as birth control or condoms, which still aren't 100 percent safe."

All of the approximate 15 students interviewed stated that women should be responsible for their actions.

Overall, there is no law against abortion. It's legal in all 50 states and approximately 46 million abortions occur worldwide per year, according to The Center for Bio-Ethical Reform Web site.

Senior Kristina Cowgill is disgusted by those numbers.

"That could've been a child who grew up to find a cure for cancer or something."

Although the election is over, the issue is far from settled.

The authors were seniors this past year in Becky Bowen's journalism class at Rodriguez High School in Fairfield.

Design-an-Ad winner



Jana Howarth earned an honorable mention in The Reporter's Design-an-Ad competition for this advertisement she created for McDonald's. Jana was a senior this past year in Rodney Orosco's classroom at Vacaville High School.

Puzzles, Games, Comics winner



Marcy MacDonald earned an honorable mention in the Puzzles, Games and Comics division of The Reporter's Campus Star competition for this entry. Marcy was a seventh-grader at Notre Dame School in Vacaville this past year.