

Michelle Liu (Teen) Honorable Mention

Title: Music Lifts Us Up!

2020 was a hard year for many people across the globe and 2021 has been a difficult year too. The impact of COVID-19 has been immense and everyone has needed to adjust. The virtual environment has made people reconsider what they feel is important. Some have lost inspiration for what they love and have felt isolated and depressed. But, others have found new inspiration. Through this pandemic, one thing has never changed, people's love for the performing arts.

As a growing musician, the pandemic hit me in unexpected ways. While I enjoyed having time off and being able to focus more on music, I did not think about the numerous performances that I would miss due to the pandemic. I felt the urge to do something for my community and lift their feeling of isolation.

I wanted to play music for others as often as I could. Luckily, a nearby church welcomed me to perform at their Sunday services. This was a great opportunity for me because I could finally perform again! So, throughout the summer, I played many different church hymns and gospel songs on my violin. I found that music connects, joins and unites people through hardships and sometimes saves people from falling too far into the dark hole of depression.

As the pandemic eased and life started to feel normal again, I found myself appreciating things that I had taken for granted such as in-person learning and working with other people face to face. I loved playing for my community church and so I often still play for them on Sundays.

Through this experience, I learned that I can change the world through music. As famous musician Louis Armstrong said: "Music is life itself." It always stays in our spirits and comes with us wherever we go.