



BELLA SCHWINNE

Photojournalist of the Year candidate - Wando High School Yearbook

Trying to learn who I am has been like learning how to configure the most tedious settings on a dazzling new camera. It is challenging and it brings confusion, but it is also completely and utterly exhilarating. To say I know myself to the fullest extent would be entirely a lie. However, I do know who I'm becoming and that is the truest and most authentic version of Bella. It was in the moment I became a Photo Editor for the Wando Yearbook that my true spark began to shine through, and I entered into a season of personal growth.

Nothing is better than the feeling you get when you finally reach your most important goal. For me, that goal was becoming editor of the section I had grown to love so much during my junior year on Wando Yearbook, photo staff. I must admit my drive for photography started long before this position, I could argue that it goes back to 2020 when I first picked up a camera in quarantine. I remember the sweet moments at Edisto Beach when I fell in love with the art, the delicate temperament of a camera reminded me of myself. It reminded me of the ways in which I was forever changing, just like settings, we alter and tailor ourselves to the situations we find ourselves in whether they be positive or negative. But you see, my true dedication to the art began the second I received the title of Photo Editor in late February of 2022. This was when my gears began to turn, I was shifting into a state of personal development. It was here in these stages of becoming Bella that I realized just how capable I was of being incredible at the art of photography. It was as if someone flipped a light switch in my brain and it has never turned back off.

From the moment I became editor to every second after, I put my best foot forward. Nothing was getting in my way from reaching my fullest potential. For me photography soon became my every breath, consuming my mind even in sleep. To my friends they know me as the one that never stops editing, but it is by choice. I would not trade my passion for the world because nothing brings me peace like the perfect composure of a photograph. I lose all track of time when I am in the field whether it be for school or for my own personal gain. Since unlocking my full potential I have been able to grow personally in both my skills for the art and in my own wellbeing. I have gained skills in the fields of leadership and patience. Understanding that being a leader does not mean being a tyrant, but a figure of guidance had been my biggest growth since receiving my position of photo editor. I have also seen growth in the areas of respect and communication. Managing my staff brings me a new found respect to those that manage students day in and day out. I have grown in my thankfulness for those that have been patient with me as I still am learning to be with my staff. One can believe that growth is inevitable, but I would argue that growth cannot happen without a shift. Through my experiences I was lucky enough to undergo a positive shift and be able to grow in more ways than one.

My opportunity to be a photo editor on Wando Legend yearbook has allowed me to grow and develop new skills that benefit my wellbeing each and every day. Moving forward I will continue to use my new found personal growth to become the most authentic version of myself. The position of photo editor was only one small, but very important step on a much larger path to becoming Bella.



Amir Nawabi, 12, pauses at his normal morning playground of Isle of Palms, where he spends much of his free time surfing. This photo won 1st place Feature Photo Best in Show at the NSPA conference in St. Louis.



Ryan Carafello, 12, leads the football team charge onto the field during the pep rally before the game against rival Lucy Beckham High School. This was the first pep rally since fall of 2019 due to COVID restrictions.



Football players parade onto the field at sunset before the first home game of the year. This photo won 4th place Sports Photo Best in Show at the NSPA conference in St. Louis.



Kai Murdock, 11, throws down on a Summerville defender after breaking to the basket.



For a story on student pilots, I went up in a plane with a senior who has his license. I captured this shot of the historic Morris Island lighthouse along with other aerial shots of downtown Charleston to fit with some thematic pages in the yearbook.