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Mr. Greco

English 3

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### **A Warm Place in My Heart**

If you venture away from the bustling restaurants and cafes of downtown Mountain View onto the residential side street named Hope among the older homes and a church you'll find a little pottery business in a pretty house with a festive garden. Inside are welcoming tables, lots of pottery to choose from, and a high spirited woman who runs the place named Lisa.

In a high-tech community such as Mountain View, you wouldn't expect to see a small pottery painting business thriving on a side street of downtown. While FireWorks Ceramics was created for children's birthday parties, it has survived in recent years because of corporate team-building events. It appears that small, craft-style businesses now have a lifeline through the support of the local tech community.

My first memory of FireWorks Ceramics is my seventh birthday party. I must have been there before, because I requested to have my birthday there, but I don't remember. What I do remember is all my friends running around and painting their chosen pottery and getting tours of the house in which the business is run. I also remember the sweet lady whose name is Lisa who runs the place and how warm and open she was, and how she made her business feel like a serene place to come and relax and have fun.

The opportunity to go back and visit this place as a teen with my friends was fun, but I discovered something that I didn't expect, that beyond birthday parties, tech company

team-building events were now supporting her business. It was unexpected due to the tech reputation of driving up rent and causing other small businesses to close. I was relieved because this business is so unique and helps make downtown Mountain View interesting and diverse.

Lisa told me the history of FireWorks Ceramics. It all began around 20 years ago after her children went back to school. She was looking to open her own business. Lisa recalls, "My kids were all out of elementary school and I had the feeling of needing to go back to work, but I didn't want to do that so I then started to talk about making a small business and it turns out that my husband used to make ceramic pieces for studios when he was in college and he said that I could make you some spare pieces in my spare time and so I said lets try it. And so we started." The business slowly grew from doing birthday parties to many other things. Now that all her children are grown up, they have children of their own so her grandchildren come to visit and help out at the studio. (Dinan)

Currently, a lot of small businesses are struggling to survive under the monopolies of big companies and the new impending doom of the Coronavirus which is very prevalent right now. This is especially true in Silicon Valley with our high rents and difficulty finding employees. This is exactly why I think we need to be supporting our small businesses. Tamara Michel, who owns Boutique 4 which is a clothing boutique on Castro Street, explains why we should support small businesses: "Now, more than ever, it's important for people to support the downtown community or it could potentially go away very quickly," she said. "With the high cost of doing business here, you can't survive too long with no income and a lot of expense."

According to the Better Business Bureau, “Small businesses provide character and individuality to a community. It is neighbors helping neighbors—friends helping friends. However, small businesses are more than that. They benefit their local communities in many concrete, quantifiable ways.” The article by the BBB continues on to say that “if you spend \$100 at a local business, roughly \$68 stays within your local economy.” It points out that they help create a unique community identity, more community involvement of business owners, encourages entrepreneurship, and so on.

There are many reasons why we should support FireWorks Ceramics, mainly because it supports a small business in our community instead of giving the money to big corporations. If we don't support these little businesses, they run the risk of disappearing and all that will remain will be the monopolies. FireWorks Ceramics is a woman-run business that has its own unique touch, something you won't find in big businesses.

When I interviewed Lisa, I asked her why people should come here. “They should come here because I’m a small business and I run it all by myself, so I take really good care of my customers. I make sure they are happy from the time they come in to the time they pick up their piece. If there's something wrong with their piece I make sure to help.” My mother and my friend agree with Lisa. Her personality and the way she runs her business is so warm and open that it makes this business stand out from the others and we should be supporting it. Also, since it has been open over 20 years, it is a part of the history and memories of many people in the area. Lisa’s grandchildren visit often and I was not the only teenager who has returned to tell her how much they enjoyed their time in her business.

My house is full of what my family painted at FireWorks Ceramics. We have a ceramic jack o'lantern which is painted as good as a 7-year-old can paint as well as many other ceramics, including a plate with all the fingerprints of the people from my birthday party. It's amazing to be able to look back at the ceramics and remember the sweet moments I had there. The first time my mom was ever there was when she went there with my brother's preschool class. As she explained, it was very chaotic, but Lisa was able to keep everyone under control. My older brother painted a gorilla and my mom helped him.

We went there many times throughout my childhood, but doing this project was the first time coming back as a teenager. I brought some of my friends along with me so I could have fun with them and get photos. I painted a ceramic soda can and some of my friends painted a mushroom and a cat mug. Lisa told me that I wasn't the only teenager to come back to her shop. One girl also came in with her friends and told her that she also came when she was little. Lisa said it was heartwarming that her small shop has impacted our lives so much that we wanted to come back and re-experience FireWorks. My friend Maya Sullivan also went to FireWorks Ceramics when she was a child but she doesn't remember much of it, however she has some memories of painting her ceramics when she was in elementary school. She said, "Even though I don't have any clear memories to share, I'm still happy for the fragments of memories I do have because honestly, going to Fireworks is fun at any age and I can only ever remember being happy going there" (qtd. in Bradshaw).

The business is located inside Lisa's house which gives it a warm homey feel and atmosphere. It's a feeling that is different from any other business I know. When you go, it's very consistent and she's always open to help you and always personally invested in making your

time there fun and relaxing as you get a chance to be an artist. When asked if she was an artist she said no, but she believes anyone can be an artist, “ I've always loved art, but I was never someone who made money with art,” she said, “and I wouldn't necessarily call myself an artist although I tell everybody everyones an artist.” Even if you aren't an artistic person, she believes that you can make wonderful things when you put your mind to it. It's hard to find that in big business where all they care about is profit and not customer satisfaction.

At the time of my interview, things were looking bright for the success of FireWorks Ceramics. Lisa was building a new clientele and people who remembered having birthdays and other fun events like me were returning to reminisce of the good memories they had there. Due to recent events like the CoronaVirus, this leaves Lisa's business and most non essential small businesses vulnerable to economic hardships. There has been community-wide support to try and keep small businesses afloat, including money from the city of Mountain View, but due to high rent and uncertainty of how long this will go on as well as the impact of the tech business, it's more essential than ever that we support small business. Hopefully in the future, Lisa's business will continue to thrive and grow like it has been before the CoronaVirus.

When I asked Lisa what memories of running FireWorks Ceramics stood out, she told me, “My favorite memory goes along the lines of seeing kids growing up and coming back here and remembering the place.” Hopefully this place will continue to make memories for people years to come.

Works Cited

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**Rubric:**

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Focus (Angle and Research)	No angle present. Feels summarized where narrative style and structure should be creatively developed. Information dominates the article – boring the reader – or writer obviously exploits the subject.	Angle is present but reflects a fairly obvious perspective of documentary subject. Article lacks balance between information and entertainment. Ethical line between exploration and exploitation may be hazy.	Angle communicates journalist's perspective of documentary subject, although it could be more distinct, allowing for a more interesting (informative and entertaining) picture of the subject within the context of a current researchable topic.	Angle communicates journalist's distinct perspective of documentary subject, sustaining an entertaining & informative article that illustrates how the subject is interesting as well as important within the context of a current researchable topic.
Organization (Profile Structure)	No clear profile structure. Existing parts don't connect in a logical way, making the profile difficult to follow.	Profile structure is somewhat apparent, but some parts are obviously flawed or disjointed. Feels too summarized. Needs more anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue to define the narrative arc.	Profile structure is complete and easy to follow, but could be better arranged to enhance reader's experience. Somewhat effective use of anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue. Narrative arc is present but has some weakness.	Profile structure is organized professionally, enhancing the reader's experience. Highly effective use of anecdote/story and quotation/dialogue to create a compelling narrative arc.
Style	No literary devices or significant details are used. Paper may read like an obituary or a Wikipedia page. Vocabulary is overly simplistic or vague, with no attention to purpose/audience.	Language is fairly plain, with some specific details about the subject, but more/varied details and literary devices needed. Portrait of subject seems incomplete. No visual metaphor present. Vocabulary may reflect a couple instances of specificity or sophistication, but it largely lacks attention to purpose/audience.	Obvious thought has been put into the use of diction, imagery and detail to portray the subject creatively, although the visual metaphor needs to be more clearly developed to communicate writer's angle. Vocabulary occasionally reflects attention to specificity and sophistication, although it could be improved in consideration to purpose/audience.	Obvious thought has been put into the use of diction, imagery and detail. Visual metaphor is well developed, communicating writer's angle. Overall, stylistic choices give the article a fresh and original creative texture. Vocabulary reaches a level of specificity and sophistication that is appropriate for the purpose and audience of this article.

Research and MLA Format	Writer doesn't use interview transcripts and/or there is no indication of secondary research. No indication of research-backed questioning. In-text citations and works cited page are missing.	Writer makes limited use of interview transcripts and secondary sources, or relies solely on the "star" interview transcript. Interview testimony prompted by research-based questions is vague. Not a clear sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page exist, but they contain many errors or inconsistencies.	Writer makes satisfactory use of the required interview transcripts and secondary sources (see Level 4 description), although some interview testimony or secondary source material may be either overused or too limited. Interview testimony prompted by research-based questions is apparent, but could create a clearer sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page are close to MLA standards, but there are some errors.	Writer makes intelligent use of the required three interview transcripts and three secondary sources ( <b>Honors students need at least five secondary sources, including two scholarly database sources and a nonfiction book</b> ). Effective use of interview testimony prompted by research-based questions gives the reader a clear sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page are perfect by MLA standards.
Mechanics	Writing obscured by spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.	Writing contains some errors, affecting the reader's understanding.	Writing contains a few errors, but not at the expense of understanding.	Writing is polished, free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

Grade: B or **B+**