My Little Candle
Kelly Shen

Last summer,
a little candle was lit,
and a spark ignited.

Plans to change the world.
Enlighten,
and educate.

A group to spread environmental awareness,
to save my peers from ignorance.

Today,
I would like to say,
that these fantasies yielded to reality.

But I cannot.
Time simply flew away.

Although it did have a good start,
with my good friend and fellow student Kevin.

He was an outlet for my ideas,
and creator of new ones.

I talked with my friends,
and some agreed to support,
and join this future group.

I also reached out talked with others that I did not know, but were interested in joining an environmental group.

Plans gained potential, and were ready to take off.

A couple of e-mails sent out, advertising events held by nearby organizations.

The first event was to be a marsh cleanup, planned early on, to make sure people saved the date.

But when that date came closer, people forgot, had higher priorities, and it fell through.

Other plans were made to talk and cooperate, with the local open space committee, and teachers and administrators.

Educate through hands on activities: documentaries and newsletters.

Yet time still flew.

In other news, an announcement was made.
A competition was to be held:
Collect the most trash,
for a little surprise!

Wrappers were saved from the ground,
and yogurt cups from the landfill.

Everything, anything, collected,
and ready to turn into something new.

Chip bags to folders, juice pouches to pencil cases.

This was Terracycle.

I immediately hopped to work,
becoming the trash can of the lunch table,
shoveling trash in my hat during marching band games,
washing out yogurt cups in the passing time between classes,
snatching wrappers from the hallway floor,
and carrying around my Terracycle box.

An ordinary cardboard box,
turned into something extraordinary.

My enthusiasm for trash collecting triggered others to join in.

Many using the “surprise” as incentive,
but others simply motivated by watching a peer collecting.
Collecting
Collecting
Collecting

Boxes and bins filled high with trash.

Those not collecting,
began to look at what they were eating,
and realize the tons of waste being produced.

(disgusted faces ensued)

They have yet to change their habits,
but realization was a start.

And my family,
my brother making trips to the box daily,
then slowly,
those trips decreasing, as better food choices were made.

My mom attending a conference,
watching the trash accumulate by the bagful,
talking to the coordinator and bringing it home instead.

The box grew,
waste recycled.

<p>I can no longer let this trash go.

There is that saying:
One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.
And in this case, all those useless wrappers, yogurt cups, broken cellphones, and empty ink cartridges, became my treasure.

Terracycle would turn these things into new ones, giving them a second chance, instead of sitting for years in a landfill, or as litter on the street, wishing they could just rot away. (which, for many, would take decades)

Yet time still flew.

Months later, looking back, I wish I took that little flame, and turned it into a roaring fire.

Memories of BELL:
Such a group of young, motivated souls, ready to change the world. Shape and mold it, with love and dedication, bubbling inside each and every one of them.

Yet time still flew.
I tried,
saw the ignorance of humans constantly consuming.

Consuming
Consuming
Consuming
Consuming
Even the hypocrisy in my school.

The environmental science classes put up posters,
urging students to terracycle.

But,
where to put the trash?

There were no Terracycle boxes like mine.
I suddenly realized,
my Terracycle box needed to open,
to the school,
and the world.

And suddenly, a second match was lit.

Ideas took flight,
new plans made.

First, to create collection boxes around the school,
to talk to teachers, administrators.
There were changes to be made.

Next, to change eating habits.

A tougher task, without a doubt,
    but possible,
    through the use of education,
and maybe changing certain types of food sold.

I still believe that one person,
can spark a domino of change.

I see it is possible.

Something as simple as putting wrappers and “trash” into a box,
    and saving it,
    can have such widespread effects.

But I also now see,
how distracted I get, with the promises I make.

Although there are constant reminders:
a big poster screaming “TEAA- Action Plan”,
    hanging in the corner of my room.

But,
other items rush in and out,
    obstructing my view.
There are so many things to do in life, yet there is only so much time.

Now,
I remember.

The words, inspiration, and thoughts from BELL.

I cannot bear to see the world go on like this, the ever increasing amount of waste, and the ignorance.

Everything we take for granted, the consequences of living in a bubble.

I take this new energy, And although time still flies, this time, I won’t allow my little candle to hide.

This time, I’m going to light up the world.