

Hit Zero

This is it. All of the hours of practice have led to this. My parents drove hours to get me here. We arrive at the arena and I leave my parents to go with my coach and teammates to the warm up area. I am on the Dream Holy team. First, we stretch so we don't pull any muscles. Then, we go to a long, narrow mat to practice our stunts on a small rectangular mat. Next, we go to a larger rectangular mat to run through our routine. Our coach encourages us to "hit zero", meaning zero mistakes or point deductions. Then I realize we only have one minute until we take the stage.

Our coach leads us to the stage and goes to sit and watch us. We go through black curtains to enter the stage and then our eyes are met by the bright stage lights. The stage lights make the rhinestones on our uniforms twinkle like stars in the night sky. We get in position and stand still with our heads down and our hands by our sides. My hands begin to sweat and time seems to stand still as we wait. When the music starts, my head snaps up. Beyond the bright lights, the people in the audience look like shadows. My heart is pounding like the bass in the music. Soon, we hit the jump section, performing toe touches and pike jumps. Then we do our tumbling passes, which include: round offs, back handsprings, walkovers, and combinations of those skills. Then, it's time for the pyramid: stunts that are connected together. Now comes the dance finale! My body moves to the beat of the music as I shake my hips. When we hit our final pose, there is a moment of silence before the audience claps and cheers loudly.

My breath is heavy as I run off the stage. I feel tired and excited at the same time. I hug my coach and my teammates. My coach tells us how proud she is of our performance. I find my parents and hug them. Their eyes are watery and their smiles take up half of their faces. I sit and watch the other teams until it's time for awards. I go on the mat and sit with my coach and teammates. All of the teams have a dance party until the announcement of the awards begins. The announcer starts with 3rd and 2nd place awards. Then, the announcer says, "First place goes to" and then there's a long pause. I hold my breath and squeeze my teammates' hands. The announcer then says "Dream Holy!" We won! My teammates and I jump up and down and we scream when we learn that we "hit zero." This is it. All of the hours of practice have come to this. We are champions. I feel like I won a million dollars.

Based on a True Story

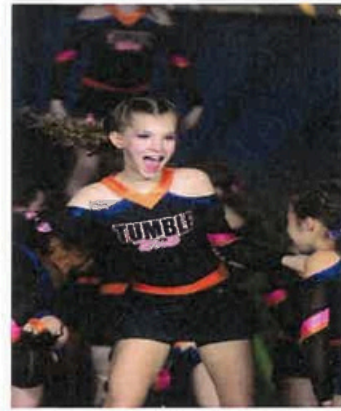
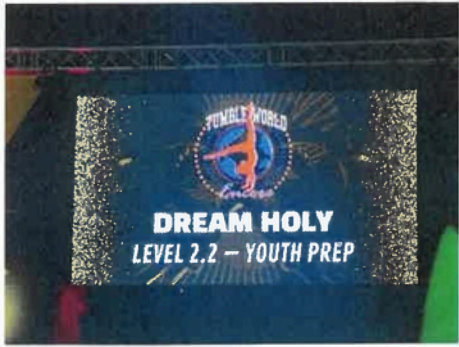
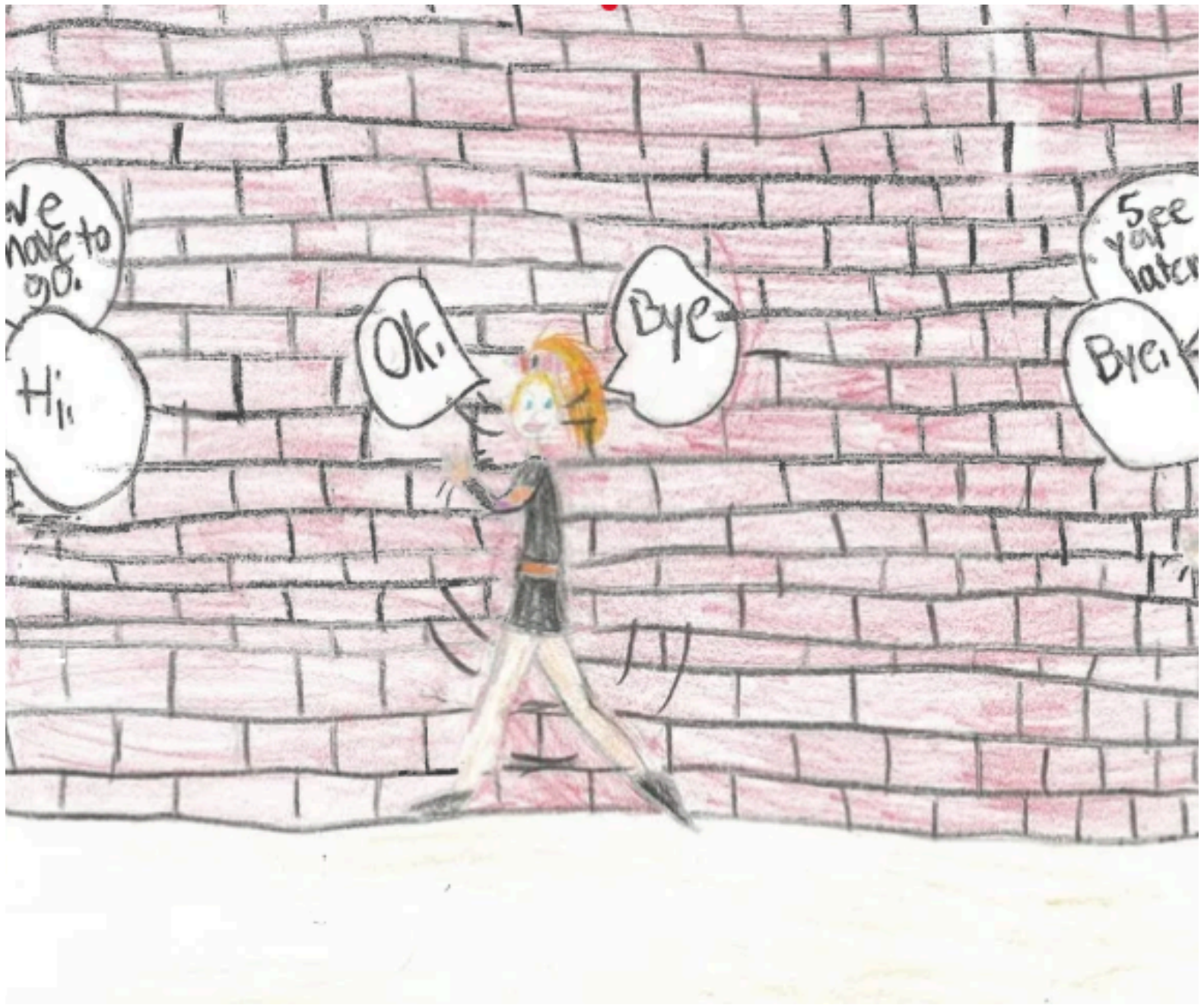
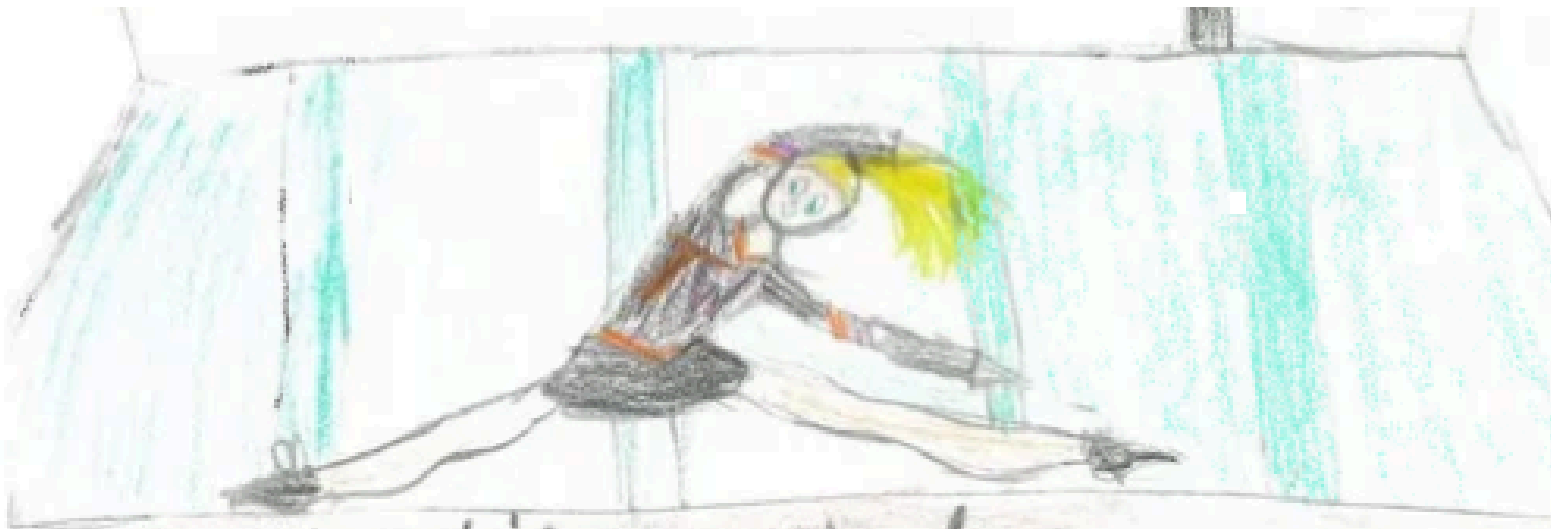


Illustration #11

WELCOME

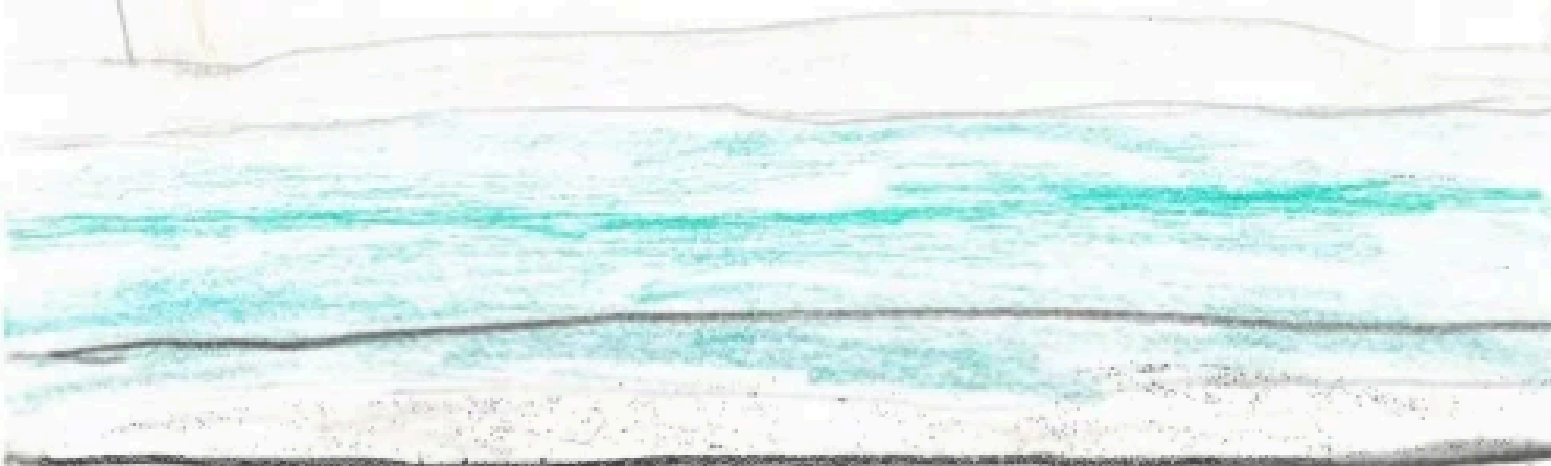






Stretching mat 1

tumbling mat 2



Full out mat
stunt mat 3

0:0 1:00

