

## Impact Statement

Kaia Goodrich, Grade 8.

**Avian Hero**, 2018.

Clay, paint, paper, 6 x 6 x 6 Inches.

LaVilla School of the Arts, Jacksonville, FL

Unsung Hero: Cher Ami

Cher Ami was a homing pigeon who served in World War I. Her name means "Dear Friend". She delivered a message that saved 194 men in the United States of America's "Lost Battalion". The soldiers were being bombarded by friendly fire, and could not escape. Cher Ami was one of several pigeons that they sent for help, and the only one who made it. She arrived at her perch with a bullet wound in her chest, a blind eye, and a leg hanging by a tendon. Her message was delivered, the firing stopped, and the men survived. Cher Ami was later awarded the Croix De Guerre medal for her bravery. The message she delivered read, "We are along the road parallel to 276.4. Our artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us. For heaven's sake, stop it".

I find the story of Cher Ami inspirational because of the powerful instinct that led her to deliver her message. I have always marveled at the abilities of homing pigeons to find their way back home, and the fact that this bird could still get home even though she had been shot in the chest and the leg, is truly incredible. The impulse to get home to safety was so strong in this little bird that she could survive all that, and also save 194 men in the process. I also admire her bravery. Usually you would think that such a small and timid animal would run away to safety and let the men die right? Not Cher Ami. She probably had no idea how many people she was helping, but she still flew on, through all the pain and fear. All the other birds that they had sent before her had been shot down. Cher Ami however, was fast, determined, and lucky enough to make it back and deliver her message.

My interpretation of this amazing bird features her bursting out of the clouds with bullets flying all around her. I imagine that the enemy knew that she was carrying an important message, and were firing at her from all directions. In my sculpture, she is twisting around to dodge the bullets. One has hit her in the chest, and she has a small, bloody wound right in the middle of her breast. In actuality, the wound would have been much bigger-about the size of a quarter-but I wanted this piece to reflect more on the emotion of the moment and not the physical wound. In this piece, I have attempted to capture her raw fear, but also determination in her posture and her facial expression. The paper coming out of Cher Ami's leg cannister has the message that she carried written on it. I thought this message was important to include, because it was this particular message that saved the 77th infantry. If the message was not clearly shown, it could have just been any of the other birds that had been shot down in their attempts to deliver their messages.

I have shared my project with my community by telling my friends and family the story of Cher Ami and showing them my piece. I also plan to exhibit my sculpture at the eighth grade gallery at my school along with a description and the story of Cher Ami. That way, anyone who walks into the gallery will see my piece and learn about her.