

## Impact Statement

Megan Langlinais, Grade 12.

***Her Heart***, 2016.

Colored pencil, marker, pencil on paper, 8 x 10 Inches.

Delcambre High School, Delcambre, CA

Unsung Hero: Helen Taussig

I chose Helen Taussig as my unsung hero because she is an awe-inspiring woman. Helen overcame sexism and challenged the gender roles of her time. Everyone told Helen that she couldn't change people's mindsets and to give up, but she never did. Despite having hearing loss and severe dyslexia, Taussig earned a bachelor's degree in 1921. While in college, to further dissuade and isolate her, Taussig was barred from speaking to male classmates because she was a woman. Harvard Medical and Boston University both denied degrees to her because of her gender. Taussig endured sexism and hate but eventually reached her goal. She became chief of the Pediatrics Department at Johns Hopkins. Taussig became one of the first women to be an associate professor at Johns Hopkins and eventually went on to become one of their full time professors. Taussig's publication of Congenital Malformations of the Heart, helped push pediatric cardiology to become an independent field. In 1965 Taussig stunned everyone by being voted President of the American Heart Association. Towards the end of her career, Taussig became completely deaf but she did not allow this to hold her back. Taussig learned how to read lips to communicate and used her fingers to "hear" the heart beats when she could no longer use a stethoscope. Taussig's greatest achievement was her discovery of the cause of anoxemia or "blue baby syndrome." Taussig not only discovered that anoxemia was caused by blood vessels blocking oxygen from getting to the lungs but also developed a shunt that effectively rectified the problem. Helen Taussig is truly an inspiring woman for achieving so many great things and overcoming the many obstacles in her path due to gender discrimination. I think many young women can look to Helen Taussig as a role model and learn from her that when we remain strong and continue to fight adversity, women can achieve goals. The vision behind my creative interpretation is that no matter how many times we are denied a dream we can always rise. There was once a time in my life when I wished for a Doctor like Helen Taussig. I was given the diagnosis of Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia and I was put on the roughest path of my life so far. My family and I never gave up hope that my medical team would save my life. I was only four years old, but learned at this early age that in life, we have to fight and overcome. I feel like I can identify with Helen Taussig's struggle. I felt weak and delicate like her patients but eventually, with the care I received, I was brought back to health. Just like flowers are delicate creatures and can be killed or destroyed so easily, so can self-confidence and self-esteem. Helen Taussig could have given up when everyone told her no. She could have quit and said that continuing was too hard or impossible and no one would have blamed her for it, but that's not the end of her story. Taussig fought the gender stereotypes and became a doctor and went on to save hundreds of lives. The imagery and methods that I used to arrive at my final piece came from many different themes and ideas that came to mind when learning about her life. Upon reading the passage about Helen Taussig and learning that she was a heart doctor I decided that my piece had to involve a heart. After learning how she overcame her own roadblocks, I decided to do a piece that would show a strong heart to represent a strong woman, the heart would be colorful and have many hues that were full of life. Taussig

saved many lives which made me think of a rebirth of sorts, leading me to nature and flowers. I put all of these ideas together and my composition came to life. A bright, colorful heart inside a ribcage symbolizing the strong woman who helped so many children live healthy lives, with flowers growing out of the heart, flourishing and blooming, showing the new life she gave to so many and symbolizing how Taussig never let anyone or anything ever keep her from achieving her goal. Helen Taussig has truly inspired me to reach for my goals and let nothing hold me back, both for the past, present, and future.