

C

LIFE

SINGER-SONGWRITER
MIDWESTERN MRS
WINS CONTEST,
PLAYS AT LEGENDARY
BLUEBIRD CAFE. C2



Historic log home sits on more than 20 acres in Englewood

INSIDE HOMESPLUS: Originally built in 1919, the home has many updates, redwood siding and 5 bedrooms. C1

ON THE ARTS



Curtis Mann uses images of his family in his current exhibit, “Precious Blood,” at The Co. They include close-up shots of eyes: his wife’s, his children’s and his own. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Angst and tranquility
come together at The
Contemporary Dayton



Meredith Moss

It was about 20 years ago that Sean Wilkinson and Curtis Mann found themselves in the same classroom at the University of Dayton.

Wilkinson was a photography professor; Mann was a mechanical engineering student.

“What I remember is that Sean was so incredibly knowledgeable about the subject in deep and authentic ways,” says Mann now. “I gravitated toward him because he was so calm and I found his feelings about photography beautiful.”

Wilkinson remembers his former student as a marvel.

“Curtis was so caught up in something new to him, he was a real force of energy,”



Sean Wilkinson hopes his photographs will provide tranquility and grace to those who view them. Pictured: Sean Wilkinson, “Flora, Part Three #10,” courtesy of the artist.

he said. “He was such a bright student, eager and ready to learn and so enthused about what he was doing in a low-key way. He was great with the other students who respected and admired him. If anything

needed attention, like a camera that was broken, Curtis would quietly fix it.”

It was Wilkinson and other UD professors who were

Moss continued on C3

VISUAL ART

Artist wants you
to ponder materials,
mortality in exhibit

By Hannah Kasper Levinson
Contributing Writer

The theme of the 2024 Foto-Focus Biennial is “Backstories,” and in Curtis Mann’s exhibit, “Precious Blood,” on view at The Contemporary Dayton, one is invited to muse on the significance of the materials he combines with photography – concrete and glass.

Usually we associate concrete with construction. A heavy material with a sense of permanence, its weight, density, and coldness may not seem conducive to emotive artwork. But in Mann’s installation, concrete is used in tandem with religious iconography and deeply personal subject matter about his recently departed mother.

What is the backstory of concrete, as a material? It has been around since Roman times, but its use gained new traction in modern architecture and art. Concrete was well loved by Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Henry Moore. Cities were rebuilt with concrete after World War II, and it was in turn used to construct memorials. British artist Rachel Whiteread’s Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial in Vienna, for example, casts a library in negative space, thereby lending dimensionality to the concept of what is missing.

MORE DETAILS

What: Curtis Mann’s “Precious Blood” and Sean Wilkinson’s “Flora”

When: Through Dec. 21

Where: The Contemporary Dayton, 25 W. Fourth St., Dayton

Online: codayton.org

Symbolically, concrete can represent transformation, as it is created chemically by changing from powder to liquid to a solid form.

Emotionally, there seems to be a connection between the permanence of concrete and the way in which a photograph freezes a moment in time even after the subject is gone.

A distinct memory of Mann’s mother passing from a heart attack found its way into the concrete hands placed on the floor of The Co. “They were trying to save her, and they couldn’t,” he reflects, and describes being invited to see her right after.

On the floor of the hospital room, he noticed latex gloves that had been hastily tossed off by the paramedics.

“As I was making the work, I was wearing (gloves) while making

Curtis Mann continued on C2



Curtis Mann, Last Arrangement, Inkjet print, Inkjet prints mounted to glass, concrete, acrylic vitrine, 2024, dimensions variable

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Haunted HeARTS producer’s home also community art space

By Hannah Kasper Levinson
Contributing Writer

Catty-corner to the abandoned railroad track that cuts through Dayton’s Historic Inner East stands a cottage, its colorful contents obscured by foliage. You have to wonder what Dayton was like in 1870, the year the house was built, when freight trains bustled so close to front porches. The overgrown rails beg for urban renewal – a bike path, a garden, public art.

Creative vision is what Adair Tudor brought with her when she moved to the cottage in 2019. Tudor came of age in Seattle’s DIY community, living in collectives



– at one time in a former silent movie theater with 30 other artists and musicians. She knew that she wanted to bring a collaborative sensibility to Dayton,

and transformed her home into OKO STUDIO, an artist-run gallery presenting seasonal art happenings and small publications.

“OKO STUDIO is an evolving

An art opening at OKO STUDIO, which runs out of Adair Tudor’s Historic Inner East cottage. “A big part of the OKO space is the backyard, where I have food pop-ups and performers.”

MORE DETAILS

What: Haunted HeARTS, an art-infused Halloween Party Fundraiser by OKO STUDIO

When: 8 p.m.–midnight Oct. 31

Where: The Rotunda at the Dayton Arcade, 35 W. 4th St., Dayton

Cost: \$30 for the designated driver, \$50 general admission (ages 21 and older)

A DAY IN THE LIFE

“A Day In the Life” is a routine lifestyles feature of the Dayton Daily News. Know of someone with a very unique story to tell? Email details to hannah.kasper@gmail.com.

project,” Tudor said. “It is extremely DIY and community-oriented. It was brought about because I was like ‘Where are the house shows? Where’s the exper-

imental art?’ And I was like, well, I’ll just do it. It aims to be a place for creatives to come together and

Tudor continued on C3



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LIFE

THAT'S LIFE

Her latest effort to improve his diet isn't going smoothly



D.L. Stewart

Through decades of persuasion, gentle prodding and occasional nagging, my wife has managed to alter my eating habits. Fried foods seldom appear on our kitchen table anymore. Slabs of red meat that once filled my plate have been pushed to the edge by green beans and brown rice. Peaceful Sunday-morning breakfasts

of pancakes and sausage have been disrupted by the annoying crunch of granola.

All these changes have been inflicted upon me in the name of good health and long life, so I appreciate her efforts.

But I draw the line at drinking my meals.

The specter of trading my knife and fork for a straw wafted into our kitchen a few weeks ago when I saw her dropping chunks of pineapple into a newly-arrived gadget that resembled a blender. But any hope that

we were having pina coladas for dinner was dashed when she added a handful of blueberries, a couple of kale leaves and some watermelon seeds.

“What are you making?” I inquired.

“Smoothies,” she said.

“Why?”

“They’re very good for you. Did you know that ground watermelon seeds are a goldmine of zinc and magnesium?”

“My mother told me if I swallowed the seeds a watermelon would grow in my stomach.”

While she worked on

getting the gadget to grind its seeds, I leafed through its manual, which was packed with nutritional wisdom. As the booklet asked, “What would you rather eat? ½ cup nutrient extracted flax seed or 100 slices of whole wheat bread?” I’d go for the bread in a minute, especially if it surrounded slices of salami.

The manual also contained recipes it called “rawlicious,” none of which contained the essentials for happy eating, such as bacon. A lot of them just sounded “raw-

ful.” Although a glass of Butter Bean and Broccoli Soba Noodles might be palatable after three glasses of pinot grigio.

Eventually the machine produced a drink that looked even uglier than that recipe sounded. Not that a food’s appearance would necessarily stop me from sampling it. I would gladly eat lobsters and oysters every day if I could afford them. But the concoction put the “ug” in ugly.

“Here, take a sip,” she urged.

“I’d love to, sweet-

heart,” I lied, “but I just brushed my teeth.” (That had been, in fact, hours ago, but it was the first excuse I could come up with.)

I’m not sure how long this smoothie campaign is going to last at our house. But whenever I see her taking the gadget out of the pantry I immediately rush to the bathroom to brush my teeth.

So if nothing else, my gums have never been healthier.

Contact this columnist at dlstew_2000@yahoo.com.

Tudor

continued from C1

a space for people who typically don’t have opportunities to show in galleries.”

Coming up, Tudor will switch gears to produce an event at a separate venue. “Haunted HeaARTS”, an artful Halloween party to benefit Heartsiq and CultureWorks, will take place Oct. 31 in the Rotunda of the Arcade. It’s described as “an epic art-themed Halloween fundraiser with DJs, food, free tarot, dancing and costume contest”.

My peace

Tudor has a fenced-in double lot with a large garden and fire pit. The living and dining rooms are the gallery space. “I’ll put on a kettle and grind my coffee beans and put them in my French press. I’ve had the same morning ritual for a very long time, it’s a simple coffee and a cigarette out in my backyard. I still have that vile habit. As long as the weather is good, that’s my peace. A big part of the OKO space is the backyard, where I have food pop-ups and performers.”

A miniature farm

Three kittens recently showed up on the doorstep.

“My routine now is to do this juggling act with my kittens and my cat so they don’t have to see each other. I’ll



Adair Tudor, with Bruce the neighborhood cat. A Seattle native, Tudor runs OKO Studio, an artist-run gallery, out of her 1870 house in Dayton’s Historic Inner East. She also produces a seasonal zine.

do my kitten duties, which is like running a miniature farm. And then there’s Bruce who comes around. He’s a handsome Tuxedo who’s been courting me for like a year.”

Creature of habit

“I come back in here (she gestures to the kitchen) and get something in my belly. I’m a creature of habit. My standard is half an avocado, kimchi, soft boiled egg and yogurt. On a good day, I go tend my garden and weed. I am planting garlic right now.”

Design time

“With Haunted HeARTS, it’s all about time management. I’ll hop on my tablet and draw up some designs for a reel. I’ll edit something together with my laptop. Between drawing the graphics and editing and finding the music, it eats up a lot of my time. A 9 second reel that I edited for one of the DJs took me three hours! I enjoy doing it but the irony of social media (is) how much people put into it. It’s about chewing it down.”

“I do a little bit of everything art-wise,” says Tudor,

who keeps a studio in her house. “Graphic design, typography, poster design, acrylic painting, interior design. I was a drummer in several bands in Seattle. Right now my main type of artistic expression is through events and landscape design.”

Day job

“I go to the Dayton Convention Center as an event coordinator, planning anything from galas to large scale cheer competitions. I go in every day for two to nine hours. I grew up very punk



Adair Tudor runs OKO STUDIO, an artist-run gallery, and produces OK OHIO, a seasonal zine.

rock and anti-establishment. I turned 40 and I’m like, I need...savings (laughs). So I guess you could say that I’m selling out. Or just taking care of myself for once.”

Garden greens

“I’m frugal and like to eat clean so I typically eat at home. I go out to my garden and pick some things to prepare lunch. I’ll prepare an arugula salad with all the fixings – cucumber and tomato and radish from the garden. I try to go for a walk to clear my head after I eat lunch.”

Memento mori

“I love my home. I do a lot of putzing around. I find cat whiskers a lot. While I’m putzing around I’ll find a whisker and put it in my little cat whisker collection (laughs). It happens almost on the daily.”

Party prep

In the early evening, Tudor and her Haunted HeARTS event partner, Ray, meet at the Arcade’s Rotunda with artists to film a promo video. There were specific reasons for choosing the venue. “I wanted underrepresented artists to have an opportunity to show in an elevated space that typically they maybe wouldn’t have access to. I also wanted the attendees to (have an) affordable ticket price. I want people from Oakwood and North and South and West Dayton to come. I want it to be accessible and a melting pot of people. There will be five installation artists, dancing, and getting creative with costumes.”

Boogie (down)

“I am not that social because I work in events and I’m kind of burnt out after (years of) going to shows every weekend in Seattle, working and living in venues. I stay at home most nights and I’ll start editing what I filmed or working on a poster commission. I’ll put something on in the background. I’m always listening to upbeat things like boogie or Italian disco or R&B. I kind of disassociate in the evening.”

Contact this contributing writer at hannah.kasper@gmail.com.

Moss

continued from C1

instrumental in dramatically altering Mann’s career path. That journey has brought him full circle to the current exhibit at The Contemporary Dayton where Mann’s photography is being showcased along with the work of his esteemed professor.

“I am absolutely honored to be sharing gallery space with Sean,” said Mann, who hadn’t seen his mentor in 20 years and said it’s exciting to know his work is being shown alongside the work of a man who first inspired him.

Mann’s exhibit is entitled “Precious Blood.” Wilkinson’s is “Flora.” The idea for the joint exhibit came from curator Jeffrey Cortland Jones, who taught Mann in a painting class and was a colleague of Wilkinson’s.

Both exhibits are part of the FotoFocus Biennial and will be on display through Dec. 21. Mann, who now lives near Providence, Rhode Island, will return to his hometown on Friday, Nov. 22 to join his mentor for a free artist talk.

Something ‘clicked’

“I had always been interested in art and I was creative and loved to draw as a kid,” said Mann, who grew up in Trotwood and attended Precious Blood elementary school and Chaminade-Julienne Catholic High School. “But I never identified as an artist or thought of being one. I didn’t think that was a ‘thing.’”

Because he was so strong in science and



Sean Wilkinson is professor emeritus at the University of Dayton. His exhibit, “Flora,” is currently at The Co. CONTRIBUTED

math, his dad recommended he study engineering in college.

“It made sense, people told me that’s what I would be good at,” said Mann.

But UD opened his eyes to other options.

“I saw kids who were passionate about engineering and I wasn’t,” he said. “I had a friend who had a camera and I thought that looked interesting. So I took a basic photography class where I learned how to use a camera. Photography appealed to me because it was a combination of math, technical stuff and freedom. It clicked pretty fast.”

At the request of his father, Mann completed his engineering degree and had an engineering job lined up after graduation.

“All the right things said I should take that job, but the teachers at UD said I should try photography if I loved it.” And so he decided to return to Dayton and audit every photography class that UD offered. He then headed for graduate school in Chicago and by 2014 was working full-time as an

artist, combining photography and sculpture.

Since that time Mann’s work has been exhibited widely: at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. In addition to gallery exhibitions, Mann also teaches photography to high school students in Dedham, Massachusetts.

“I think what captured me is that I found the medium very complex,” Mann said. “I loved images and the power they held and I liked messing with that. I don’t always make pictures. A teacher at UD encouraged me to tear a photo in half and I realized that changed everything. I’ve been doing that ever since.”

Mann’s current exhibition

All of Mann’s work currently on display at The Co was made specifically for this exhibit. It is his first solo exhibit in his hometown.

“I knew I wanted to make something connected with Dayton and coming home,” he said.

HOW TO GO

What: Curtis Mann: “Precious Blood” and Sean Wilkinson: “Flora”
Where: The Contemporary Dayton, 25 W. Fourth St., Dayton
Hours: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, through Dec. 21
Admission: Free
Related programming: A free artist talk by Curtis Mann and Sean Wilkinson in conversation with artist/writer Carmen Winant will be held at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 22. A reception will follow.
For more information: 937-224-3822 or codayton.org

“I had never made work about my own family.”

What resulted is an exhibit that pays tribute to his relationship with his mother, Lois Mann, who passed away in May of 2023.

“I loved my mother dearly and she loved me,” he said.

But it wasn’t always an easy relationship. A significant element of Mann’s exhibit deals with the differences between mother and son when it came to religion.

“She was a devout Catholic and very religious and I am an atheist,” Mann said. “When I thought about her funeral and was reading some of her old notes, it brought all that up. We wouldn’t fight over it but it was a hard difference to navigate. Even as a child I had questions when I was at Precious Blood school. My relationship to religion was born in Dayton.”

Mann said he has always relished working with challenging materials.

“I worked with bleach for a series; I had to form a relationship with it. And I had to learn how to work with glass or it would cut me. Glass breaks the way

it wants to break so I have to respect it and collaborate with it.”

In the current exhibit, Mann blends shards of glass with slices of photos.

“It’s about the fragility of something,” he explained. “When I heard that Sean would be showing a series of flora, I was excited because I had been thinking about funeral bouquets – elements that look like thorns and sticks. I wanted to bring pieces that connected with Sean’s work.”

Mann, who works in a detached garage that he’s made into a studio, said Dayton represents the place and the relationships that made him. His father, Thomas Mann, still lives here.

“I think Dayton is interesting – beautiful and diverse,” he said. “And Sean is so important to who I am today.”

Calm and tranquility

Wilkinson, whose work is available in the gift shop at The Co., said he’d be hard-pressed to think of two exhibits that are so radically different.

“There’s a great deal of angst in Curtis’ exhibition, there’s anger and violence

and a sense of real inner conflict,” he said. “And with all of those sharp glass edges it’s a cutting exhibit.”

His own photos of plants provide a dramatic contrast. He’s hoping visitors will experience a sense of tranquility when viewing them, a sense of contemplation and a sense of encountering something beautiful, whether or not they recognize a particular plant.

For that reason, Wilkinson requested that no wall labels accompany his photographs.

“Every single one of them was made in one of the Five Rivers MetroParks but that is completely irrelevant and I think identifying the park or the plant would be distracting,” he explained. “I just want people to have time to look at the pictures themselves as images and not be distracted.”

“I want them to find the exhibit a valuable and meaningful experience and encounter something beautiful that makes them ponder and find some sense of peace and grace.”

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LIFE

LOCAL MUSIC SCENE

Singer-songwriter wins Nashville contest, plays Bluebird Cafe



Brandon Berry
Dayton Americana

“As a young child, you have a lot of creativity. Imagination is freer to flow out of you. For a while, I didn’t access that side of me.”

songwriter Georgia Evans, aka Midwestern Mrs, started singing and playing guitar during the pandemic.

She recalled hearing a quote about creativity, something to the extent of: make something; you don’t have to share it with anyone.

That sentiment gave Evans agency to start writing songs. Influenced by John Prine and John Hartford, she started to do just that.

She had been playing violin in orchestras and chambers since she was 10, but it wasn’t until a family cookout around 2021 that Evans performed an original song on guitar, alone, in front of a crowd. There, she played “Canary,” a love story/tragedy about a wanderlust couple and a coal mine collapse.

Despite only having played guitar for a short while, the response garnered Evans encouragement to keep writing – to make something – and to continue sharing her voice.

This year, Evans, a stay-at-home mom, submitted a video performance of her song “Stay Afloat” to the Bluebird Golden Pick Contest, a now-monthly contest put on by Nashville’s legendary venue, the Bluebird Cafe. The 90-cap listening room has been a launchpad for many notable artists, including Taylor Swift and Garth Brooks.

In September, Georgia Evans was crowned a Bluebird Golden Pick Contest winner.

She was putting her kids to bed when she got the notification.

“I checked my phone, and all of a sudden I was just so excited,” she said. “I was jumping up and down and yelling. It was an instinctual reaction. And then bedtime didn’t happen for another two hours because we were all just adrenaline-spiked.”

As a result of September’s contest, Evans won a Taylor American Dream guitar, a trip to the Taylor Guitars showroom in Nashville and tickets



Georgia Evans, aka Midwestern Mrs, conducts a pre-show soundcheck at the Bluebird Cafe. CONTRIBUTED

to a Bluebird Cafe show. Evans also had the chance to perform two original songs at Bluebird’s Open Mic Night on Sept. 16.

Musicians from all over the world – from California and Arizona to Canada and Ireland – played that night. Evans opened the show.

“I was nervous; they have pictures of people that have been there, songwriters that mean a lot to lots of different people,” Evans said. “When I got up on stage, I was really trying to hold it together. All the emotions were just flowing through me.”

“Stay Afloat” is an exploration of Evans’ struggles navigating parenthood and mental health. While performing her contest-winning song, sniffles and other visceral responses permeated the crowd, particularly at a table to her left. She made a point not to make eye contact, and to just keep playing.

Writing “Stay Afloat” was cathartic for Evans, too. It allowed her to explore the pres-

sures put in place by the societal expectations of parenthood, and the strength it takes to hold your head above water – to stay afloat – especially when others are relying on you.

“I wrote it to let myself feel those feelings, just to say I can’t fix this necessarily but I can talk about it and I can share it with my children,” Evans said. “To say if they ever feel those feelings of guilt, failure, that it’s okay to feel them. And maybe by talking about them, we give them less power over us.”

The second half of the chorus – “You do your best to swim / But your arms are busy carrying all of them” – captures what it’s like to be overwhelmed. And even if relating to the song through the lens of parenthood isn’t entirely universal, carrying emotional weight is; some of us are just trying not to sink.

As a follow-up to her 2023 self-titled debut, Evans released “Stay Afloat” on Oct. 4. Like her previous record,

the single is both self-produced and self-released. But the organic, stripped-down recording – with vocals and an acoustic guitar at the forefront – showcases Evans’ raw and honest lyrics in a way that a shinier production might have overshadowed.

Through her pseudonym Midwestern Mrs, Georgia Evans fuses the life of a mother with that of a musician, exploring the nuances of everyday experiences with the broader world around her via Americana.

She says the most meaningful thing about music is connecting with others. But maybe it’s also about making something, regardless if it’s shared with anyone. Although, if you do, like Evans did, there’s a chance you could have the incredible opportunity to play where greats have gotten their starts.

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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

In the news: a current events quiz

News in Education

How well do you keep up with the world around you? Take this week’s quiz to test your knowledge of recent national and world events.

- 1. Which country faced a nationwide blackout twice recently, caused by its aging power plants?**
A. Cuba
B. Peru
C. Haiti
D. Costa Rica
- 2. Which state has a 25-year-old running for state Senate, making him the youngest in more than 30 years if elected?**
A. Ohio
B. Alabama
C. Georgia
D. Florida
- 3. Tragedy struck at a cultural day on Sapelo Island when a dock gangway collapsed, killing seven people. Sapelo is a historic community significant to what group of people?**
A. Refugees from the Middle East
B. Descendants of former slaves
C. Descendants of people who fled communism in Cuba
D. People who opposed the U.S. government
- 4. Liam Payne died at 31 after falling from a third-floor balcony at a hotel in Buenos Aires. What famous boy band was Payne a member of before its dissolution in 2015?**
A. The Wanted
B. BTS
C. Big Time Rush
D. One Direction
- 5. A historic drought is affecting which important river that supports around 30 million people across eight countries?**
A. The Nile River
B. The Amazon River
C. The Yangtze River
D. The Yellow River
SOURCE: www.nieonline.com/ohio

- ANSWERS**
- A
 - C
 - B
 - D
 - B

Curtis Mann

continued from C1

the concrete. And I’m changing them all the time.”

One day while removing gloves he made the connection to the emergency room. With the extra concrete, he filled his gloves.

“They were just this human presence for me that interacts with the work.”

As for glass, it acts in this show like a man-made thorn that keeps you on your toes. “Last Arrangement” presents a large glass shard sticking out of the side of an acrylic vitrine. Inside the case are the words, “We shall be parted forever”. The piece does seem to suggest, don’t get close. (Sage advice if you should bring a child to this show.)

As a tribute to his mother, the exhibit is not especially warm and fuzzy. The photographs are literally untouchable; mounted as they are to cut glass, they would cut you if you tried. This “emotion of violence”, says Mann, is inherent to working with glass.

“Penance” depicts photographs of AI-generated hands in various skin tones and phases of life, all holding Catholic rosary prayer beads. The photos are inkjet prints mounted to sharp-edged glass that roughly correspond to the shapes of the hands. The materiality seems to suggest that these are not hands to hold. Rather, they may be a critique of the religion to which they refer: handle with care.

The rosary was the artist’s mother’s favorite element of Catholic ritual.

“For her I think it was that there was a female figure there with power, but for me, the rosary was about punishment.”

Speaking of thorns, we see nature’s armor echoed over in The Co’s Gallery B with Sean Wilkinson’s exhibit, “Flora.” Wilkinson, a former professor of Mann, has on display a series of tidy inkjet prints depicting close-up shots of branches throughout the seasons.

The hues of the plants evolve from celadon green to gray to umber, moving forward through time subtly like the hands of a clock. Wilkinson’s photo series encircles us, reflecting the hopefulness that comes with the changes of season, from buds to leafing out to bare thorns, and back again.

The collection of images reminds this writer of a recent passage from “Poor Will’s Almanak” by local naturalist Bill Felker: “Little by little, the leaves are coming down, and they’re covering summer when they do that. You’ll be measuring, as well as anyone, the turn of the earth.”

It’ll be warm again before we know it.

Stop by Dayton’s contemporary art center through Dec. 21 to ponder materials, mortality and seasonal timekeeping.

Contact this contributing writer at hannah.kasper@gmail.com.

GOOD POINT

Grandparent book club? Of course



Anne Marie Romer

Meeting others who share the delightful world of grandparenthood fuels an unspoken language of bliss. I’m sure other grandparents join me when I say grandchildren are simply our favorite people.

Cultivating a relationship with each grandchild is important.

I realize, however, for those whose grandchildren live far away, easy access to simple delights is far more challenging. Distance can be hard on the grandparent heart. After-school trips to the ice cream store, random sleepovers, or shopping outings depend on committed travel plans.

Recently, I began a fun “remote” activity with my grandson, which may be an ideal offering for those who live far from your grandkids. My 8-year-old grandson, Daniel, and I started a book club.

Many years ago, when my son (Daniel’s dad) was learning how to read, author J.K. Rowling’s “Harry Potter” books were hot. My older kids couldn’t get enough of the world of wizardry. Curious about the world of Harry, my

son and I snuggled together at bedtime and read aloud as spells and magic came alive. Not only that, but I felt like I was sharing my passion for reading with my child.

For me, when ranking parental legacy lessons, reading together is way up there.

Call me nostalgic, but I wanted to recreate the magic of reading I experienced with my grandson. Hence, I ordered two copies of Rowling’s first book, “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone.” One for me, and one for Daniel.

Every evening around 8 I get a FaceTime call from him. Both of us open our books where we left off, and we take turns. A few lines read by Daniel, a few lines read by me.

We often interrupt with personal commentaries when characters are funny or crazy or when clarification is needed. We usually get through 3 or 4 pages a night, but our page progress doesn’t matter because we are becoming champions of Harry.

Although we’re only on Chapter 4, I already love the tradition we are creating.

My favorite is when Daniel startles with an “ahah” moment of clarity in how the plot is thickening or characters are coming alive. “Wait, Nona!” he’ll say as he pops up

to make clear the connection of the story. I love being part of his awakening to the wonderful world of a really good book.

As an aside, the other night as Daniel and I finished our reading session, I could see his little sister, Eileen, peering through the bedroom door. “Eileen,” I asked, picking up on her desire to be part of the fun. “How about if you and I read together for a bit.” Her big smile let me know she was all in. Next thing you know, she was sitting on her bed as we read the children’s book, “Are You My Mother,” by P.D. Eastman. Pretty soon, I envision having to make a spread sheet for reading times with Nona.

Reading with a child is such a simple undertaking, but the benefits are rich and everlasting. As my son and I will never forget our discovery of the world of “Harry Potter,” I hope my grandson will now always equate getting to know Harry with Nona time. The best news is all I have to do is answer the phone and have my bookmark in place.

Anne Marie Romer lives in Centerville and is author of the book “Just Give Me the Road.” Follow her on Instagram @romerannemarie. Her email address is Romeranne319@gmail.com.