

# THE IMAGINE SOCIETY

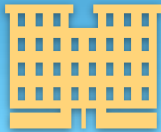
MAY 7, 2020



SPECIAL ISSUE CELEBRATING CONNECTIONS  
KIDS QUARANTINE EDITION VOLUME 5!



The world came together  
as the people stayed apart.



## INSPIRED BY CONNECTIONS

by JT Sheeler

At times during this pandemic and stay at home order many of us have felt feelings of isolation. We are not in school seeing our teachers and friends, we are missing sleepovers, birthday parties and visits with grandparents and relatives.

It seems with all of this isolation it would be impossible to become inspired to make connections with other human beings in the outside world and to use that inspiration to grow as a person and to discover deep in yourself renewed creativity as an artist.

Through my engagement with my church youth group, The Saint Patrick's Warriors, and my role as a teen leader in The Imagine Society, I have been inspired to make deeper connections with the world in spite of my isolation. I feel connected to the families experiencing homelessness in the



**hithaherzog**

Manhattan, New York

...



...continued from page 1

Siena House shelter through my work with my youth group to create the beautiful Easter “Wellness Baskets” and handmade cards that were delivered to them in time for Easter morning. Suddenly these strangers who are living a very different life from me feel like family. I may have been even happier than they were when I saw the photos of the babies receiving the overflowing baskets. I feel a connection with all the generous people who purchased baby and mother items from our amazon registry. Although I will probably never meet those people, I feel deeply connected because we took part in the same cause to get the babies the food, medicine and even treats that they need. This mutual act of love united us together even though we are strangers so far apart. I feel closer than ever to my friends in my youth group, because even though we were not all in the same room as we normally would be when doing a service project, we had to function as an even stronger team by executing this complicated and ambitious act of love in the middle of a global pandemic while following strict rules of social distancing. When our mission was accomplished, it was more rewarding than ever, as working together to achieve a goal under difficult circumstances is the most rewarding. We are bonded together now in a stronger way than was ever possible before this happened.

I have a new awareness of how many sacrifices that the frontliners are making to leave their families every day and to save lives during this pandemic. When we found out that the medical staff rarely had time to take a break to eat, my mother and I organized a safe and efficient Costco run where I helped her make shopping lists and put The Imagine Society sign on our car. Then she went to Costco and bought power bars, protein shakes, sports drinks and bottled water for the hospital, essential grocery items for the families that need them through the food pantry, and diapers, cleaning products and baby wipes for the shelter. When this massive trip was finished and my mother returned home in her full PPE suit and mask, she went to take a shower and I gave our car a “shower” by hosing it down! I then organized all the receipts and the items so that we could make a report to our donors. Even though I was not there to hand off these donations to the people that needed them, I knew in my heart that I was an important part of the story and I felt so connected to all of them. Doing this project with my mother was an unforgettable experience and made our relationship closer than ever before. I know that it would be easy to look back on this time as a period of isolation and loneliness, but for me it is a time of connections that I will carry with me the rest of my life.



JT Sheeler  
hard at work  
writing this  
essay!

It is also a time of INSPIRATION. My deeper connection to my family, friends, city and world inspired me to be creative in a new way that is more immediate and alive than ever before. I have painted pictures, written songs and even writing this piece for you came as a hit of inspiration.

Some people like to call it creativity, innovation, or even an aha moment. That doesn't change the way it feels, you feel almost superhuman just something popping into your brain.

... continued from page 2

These are miraculous moments but this time it's a different type of inspiration. An inspiration that unites you to the whole world. The inspiration that tells you not to give up and tells you to follow your dreams no matter the circumstance. You have to keep trying. No matter how many hardships you face you can't give up. Everything can be inspirational for different people from a grain of rice to the whole ocean. For me, even in this isolation, it was the new kind of connections to people that was my inspiration.

*JT Sheeler (13) is in 8th grade at York Preparatory*

Follow us on Instagram! @theimagesociety



## IMAGINE CONNECTIONS!

Facilitated by Kim Seybert, Inc. and a group of generous benefactors including Michael Ruvo, Sharon Gaffney, Rebecca Reynolds, Debbie Cherry and Kara Ross, our Advisory Board member Emily Chen was able to secure a donation of 3780 disposable surgical masks! At the same time, an Instagram connection with *N95 for NYC*, a mutual aid group aiming to secure resources for medical workers in our local community, was able to provide us with 2800 disposable surgical masks that were in demand by our heroic friends at *The Bowery Mission*. Last week we distributed the masks to our new friends at *Rego Park Healthcare*, *Wyckoff Heights Medical Center* and *ArchCare at Terence Cardinal Cooke Healthcare Center*!

Through these incredible connections we were able to distribute 6,580 masks to those who needed them. This series of events inspired Marre Gaffigan (15), to create this beautiful image entitled, "Together We Grow" as a gesture of gratitude to all who took part in this story.

This story inspired Marre to create the artistic expression displayed on the next page!



KIM SEYBERT



Together We Grow

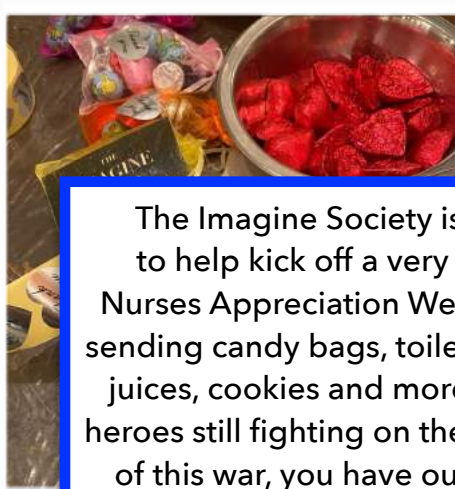




# HAPPY NURSES APPRECIATION WEEK!

May 6 -12

#Nursesweek



The Imagine Society is proud to help kick off a very special Nurses Appreciation Week! We're sending candy bags, toiletries, fresh juices, cookies and more! To our heroes still fighting on the frontlines of this war, you have our eternal gratitude. Thank you for taking care of our families, our friends, and our neighbors.

Saying thank you can be as simple as drawing a picture or sending a pizza! For ways you can help thank nurses and all our heroes, please log onto:

[theimagesociety.org/service/](http://theimagesociety.org/service/)

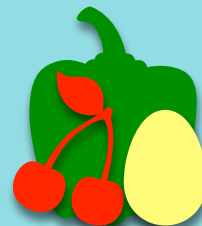
Thank you to Alison & Emily Blumstein (20), Caroline Petrow-Cohen (19), Marre (15) & Jack Gaffigan (14) and Imagine Friend David Blazina for getting in on the Nurses Appreciation spirit!







## UPDATE FROM OUR FRIENDS AT THE ASCENSION CHURCH FOOD PANTRY!

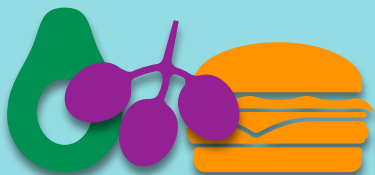


After many restaurants and schools closed in March, the Ascension Church Food Pantry received many donations and decided to distribute food every Saturday as opposed to the usual monthly schedule. With the help of donations from Catholic Charities, parishioners and many groups within The Imagine Society family, we have been able to serve meats, dairy, fresh fruit and vegetables, along with generous amounts of canned and dry goods. Our usual "client-choice" shopping style has been replaced with a system whereby clients simply write their name and phone numbers on cards, hand the card over and receive bags of groceries. For safety we are running with a skeleton staff of 4 adults. However, we have had the help of a few kids from the Spirit Squad to help pre-package the groceries on Fridays, running on split-shifts, practicing social distancing and wearing protective gear. We also piloted a program where a few kids helped to deliver food to the homes of elderly clients who can not go out. It was wonderful! We were able to serve a record amount of families this week, and they were all so grateful!

**The Ascension Food Pantry is the only one like it in New York City, run EXCLUSIVELY BY KIDS! Started and managed by the Spirit Squad, our teen youth group, we have been growing in size and making a bigger and bigger impact for over 5 years. On behalf of the Ascension Pantry, the Spirit Squad wishes to thank The Imagine Society for their continued support and generosity in this time of most need.**

Thank you to Robin Klueber for this update! For more information on how to help The Ascension Food Pantry, please email us at [outreach@theimagesociety.org](mailto:outreach@theimagesociety.org)

**KEEP SAFE, KEEP STRONG, KEEP HELPING!**



On April 24, The Wall Street Journal reported on the financial issues that threaten charitable activities like the Ascension Food Pantry, to read the full article: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pandemic-deepens-catholic-churchs-financial-crunch-from-vatican-to-parishes-11587736691>

# THE SWEETEST DONATION!

**"I want to make sure we bring as much joy with ice cream as we can on our way out."**

- Jackie Cuscuna, Founder of Ample Hills Creamery



Jackie Cuscuna, Founder of Ample Hills Creamery in Brooklyn, New York, and new Friend of The Imagine society found herself in a situation all too familiar for small businesses during this COVID19 pandemic. Her company was facing a crisis. What did Jackie do? She found a way to do immeasurable good by deciding to donate thousands of pints of her gourmet ice cream! We at The Imagine Society are so thankful that Jackie reached out to us. A former NYC public school mom, Jackie had been delivering pints of ice cream to local hospitals but she needed some help. With 3000 pints ready to donate, The Imagine Society got involved and connected this donation with our friends at The Bowery Mission, Wyckoff Medical Center, BronxCare Health System, Ascension Food Pantry, Siena House, The Children's Aid Society, and New York's finest essential workers. On April 29th, #maskedmiracle superstar Samantha Sheeler stepped up to the plate to help Jackie and her son Kaleo (11) make deliveries! Special thanks to Imagine friends Becky Garland and Glenn Askin at the New York Center for Children for helping connect us to so many families in need! More photos on the next page!










# SHINING STARS!

## A SHINING STAR WHO HELPS SO MANY!

A portrait of Chaplain Juan Toro, a man with dark hair, wearing a white shirt and a striped tie, smiling. The photo is framed by a white border and decorated with three yellow stars and lines pointing towards it.

Chaplain Juan Toro has dedicated the better part of his life to service. He is currently a Chaplain at ArchCare Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center where he is a source of support to hundreds of people who are sick, homeless, and battling addictions. He serves them all with grace, dignity and compassion. As Juan says, "the goal of chaplaincy is to make a connection," but not just any connection he says, a deep and spiritual one. He offers this support to people who are often all alone and now during COVID have no visitors. He is truly an inspiration. The Imagine Society first connected with Juan and ArchCare when The Turner Family was researching nursing homes they could reach out to during the pandemic to offer support.

**SEE PAGE 14 FOR AN INSPIRING INTERVIEW WITH OUR SHINING STAR JUAN TORO!**

## OUR OWN SHINING STAR!

Who else was impressed by the essay from our April 22nd issue? It was written by Imagine Teen Lily Vaysman (17, Stuyvesant High School), who has been a shining star for The Saint Patrick's Warriors for two years. She's been a true friend to so many in the St Patrick's community, with her earnest, sincere and generous help over the years with Warrior campaigns including *It Suits You*, *Wellness Baskets* and *#FoodForFearless*.

**THANK YOU LILY FOR YOUR COMPASSION AND COMMITMENT!**



If you have a story, would like to share something great that you or your group is doing, would like to contribute to the next Imagine Society Newsletter or even be a guest editor please email us at [outreach@theimagesociety.org](mailto:outreach@theimagesociety.org)



## #FOODFORFEARLESS EXPANDS SERVICE!



THE  
IMAGINE  
SOCIETY

## WE LOVE CONNECTING WITH NEW PEOPLE!

The Imagine Society welcomes two more hospitals to the #FoodForFearless family: BronxCare Health System, and NYU Langone! With the generous donations from Imagine Society supporters like YOU, and the help of our superstar trucks Giannetto's Pizza, Gary's Steaks, Wafels and Dinges and more, we can bring care and nourishment to our tireless frontline heroes. Special shoutouts: Delroy and Ashley at Delly's Yard Style Cooking who bring homestyle Caribbean food to Mount Sinai and Joe and Mary at Giannetto's Pizza Truck for saving the day fulfilling a last minute pizza need at NYU Langone on April 25th!

Thank you for helping #FoodForFearless continue serving 6 weeks strong!

**Over 3700 total meals served!**

Time and again we've been told what a morale boost these meals are to our healthcare heroes. They need the support now more than ever! It brings a smile to our faces, to see the smiles on these faces! Check out the next page to understand what we mean :)

If you know of a hospital, nursing home, medical center, shelter, pantry, anywhere in need of some #FoodForFearless support, please email us at:  
[outreach@theimagesociety.org](mailto:outreach@theimagesociety.org)

For more information on how you can donate, sponsor a food truck please check us out online at: [theimagesociety.org/donate/](https://theimagesociety.org/donate/)









**Ann Johnson** at BronxCare Health System for taking care of the staff and community in the South Bronx. Your dedication is a blessing to us all in NYC.

**Glenn Askin** at the New York Center for Children for your incredible help in our Ample Hills donation. The Imagine Society is honored to have made this connection with you and with the NYCC.

**Hacene Gherbi** at Gary's Steaks for being an incredible partner in our #FoodForFearless campaign. You are so helpful, kind and generous. Your food and photos touch so many hearts!

**James Winans** Interim CEO of The Bowery Mission for honoring the grace, integrity and value in every human being.

**Jackie Cuscuna** for an awe-inspiring act of kindness donating 3000 pints of ice cream to help the frontline communities. Special shout out to her 11 year old son Kaleo for donating his time to help deliver the sweet treats.

**Kathy Braidich and everyone at The Turban Project** who have produced over 45,000 pieces of headwear and face masks. Each volunteer prays while working on every item. Thank you for helping Alessia Turner (15) get started! Before COVID they donated headwear to people who have lost their hair due to medical reasons.

**Megan Fogarty** for her dedicated work as a social worker in the Emergency Department at BronxCare Health System. Megan reached out to The Imagine Society to see if we can help their hospital serving a community struggling during the COVID pandemic.

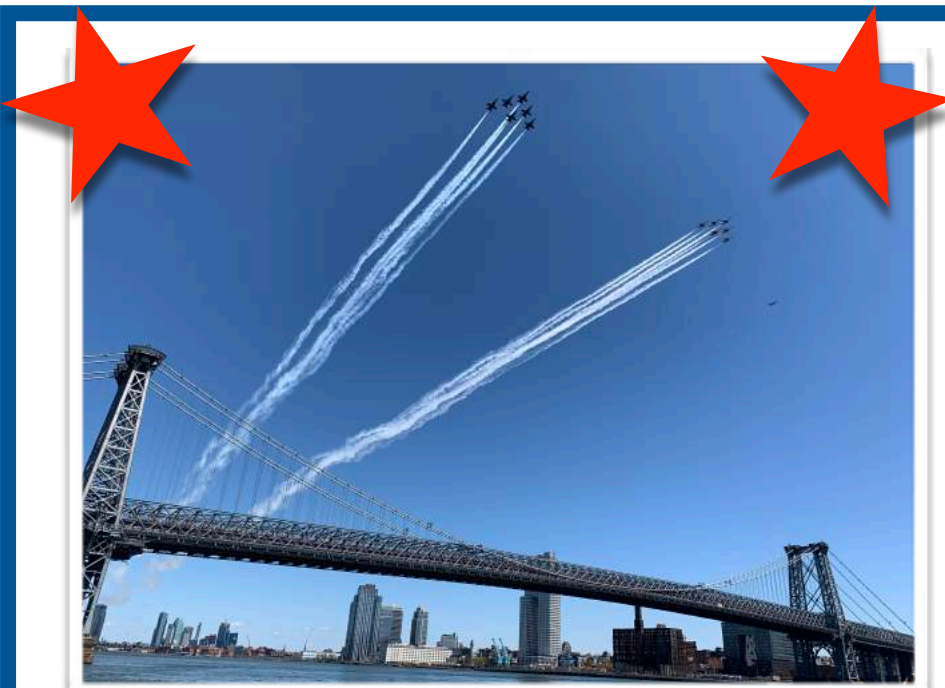
**Robin Klueber** for being such a bright light in this world to so many. Your work with the kids of the Spirit Squad, Ascension Food Pantry, LILY (Lifeforce in Later Years) continues to inspire us all.

**The Sheeler Family** for their generosity of time and spirit. The Imagine Society would never be able to do the things we do without the help of Samantha, Donald and JT (13).

**Siena House Staff** for your dedicated work helping so many mothers and their babies in need. Your work gives hope and changes lives!

To nominate your own EARTH ANGEL, email us at [outreach@theimagesociety.org](mailto:outreach@theimagesociety.org)





Friend of The Imagine Society, Stefan Raduta perfectly captures this special military flyover crossing the skies over New York City on Tuesday, April 28th. It was designed to be a tribute to those on the frontlines fighting Coronavirus. There were six Navy Blue Angel jets along with six Air Force Thunderbird F-16 Jets. The Blue Angels are part of the Navy's flight demonstration squadron.

We loved seeing this show of support from our military!



## RECHARGE ROOM AT MOUNT SINAI WEST OPENS!



#Maskedmiracles does it again! Emily Chen and Samantha Sheeler have been delivering supplies to the frontline doctors and nurses at Mount Sinai East and West Hospitals. Now Mount Sinai West has newly created the *Staff Recharge Room*. A special quiet space for our hard working and courageous frontline heroes to take a break and have a drink and snack, especially since so many don't have time to eat a regular meal. Thank you to our wonderful donors! To learn more about helping support the recharge room go to: [theimaginesociety.org/donate/](https://theimaginesociety.org/donate/)

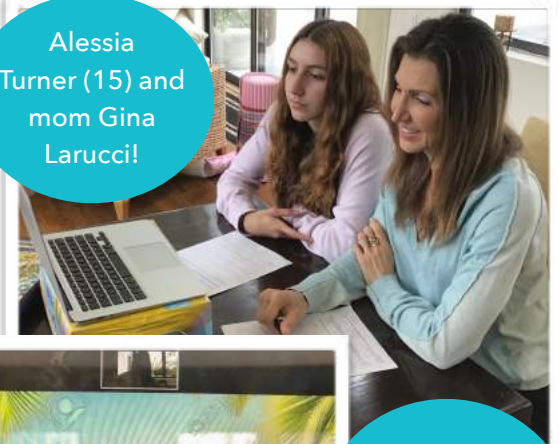


An interview with a

# SHINING STAR!

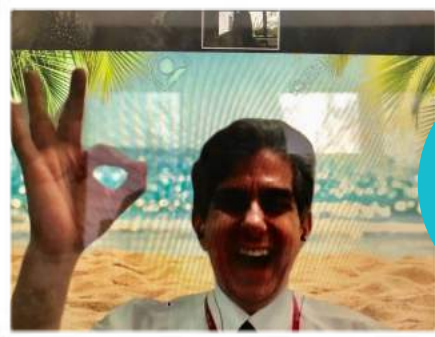
Imagine Teen and Saint Patrick Warrior Alessia Turner (15) sat down at her computer with her mom Gina Larucci to interview Shining Star Juan Toro, the Chaplain of ArchCare Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center in East Harlem. Born in Quito, Ecuador to a Chilean Mother and Bolivian Father he is now in New York City with his wife and 16 year old daughter Nissi, doing inspirational ministry. See below an excerpt from their Shining Star interview!

Alessia Turner (15) and mom Gina Larucci!



**Alessia:** What inspired you to do this work?

**Juan:** I was in Alaska, living my dream. I graduated with a degree in electrical engineering. I was working on global energy with native communities. It was my dream job. One day, the bottom fell out: all passion, all interest, all joy just disappeared. It was just empty. So then I went 'looking.' Read books, took classes, it took a while. Finally, it dawned on me. I went to Church, got involved and one day the minister was giving a message, we were crying, we were laughing, and filled with the Spirit. I said, "I could do that." And that was 'the Call,' that was the beginning.



Juan Toro  
"Life is better on the beach" Zoom background :)

**Gina:** That's Beautiful. Can you tell us what a typical day is like at ArchCare?

**Juan:** Right now it's different than it has been because of the distancing. There are 2 of us full time, myself and Father Alves, a Catholic priest from Brazil, and he is wonderful. Together we serve about 700 residents. We are doing what we call "Tele-chaplaincy." We get a list, and reach out to our residents via telephone which is not ideal. Not everyone has a phone or cellphone. We are doing the best we can to stay connected. They are very isolated. Only nurses, CMA's and cleaning staff are allowed into the rooms of anyone that is COVID positive. We are also reaching out to friends and family and offering support. No one is allowed to come visit them, sometimes getting a call letting and them know that their loved is doing fine and offer prayer is consoling.

**Alessia:** What would you say is the hardest part of your job?

**Juan:** Our residents, without exception, are living some kind of difficult situation, let's use spiritual language, they are living some kind of hell. They all would be prefer to be somewhere else. Then you compound that with their ailments, problems and issues. Chaplaincy is about meeting them where they may be...when that connection happens they don't feel alone...there is the possibility of offering a ray of hope and light in the darkness. The hardest part of Chaplaincy is establishing that connection.



Gina: Connection is something that the Warriors focus on when serving those in need. Our "Image-Inn" dinners that they prepare for the homeless men of CAMBA at Ascension Church, gives them the opportunity to make these connections, and it is powerful.

Juan: The blessing is that you think that you are here to serve them, but they are really serving you. Often times we ask them "What do you want to pray for." They may be sick, or homeless, and so many times they want to pray for someone else. They are the ones with the affliction, but they are thinking about someone else. It's noble and beautiful.

Alessia: As a Chaplain, what spiritual insights have you gained from working with these residents and being especially connected to the sick and ailing.

Juan: Chaplaincy is unique in that it forces you to really go within yourself and find those places that often times you don't want to go to. Past pains and darkneses, wounds, depressions and make your peace with it. If you can make your peace with that, you can be at that connecting level that I was speaking about earlier. We are children of God, but there are many issues with worthiness, guilt, shame. Chaplaincy helps to confront and harmonize them to the best of your ability...so that someone else can understand that they are not alone in whatever darkness they may be experiencing.

Gina: How do you re-charge, regenerate , and de-stress from your daily work?

Juan: You have to learn that self-care is really important. It's difficult because the news is everywhere, you go out, talk to a friend, and you always hear about the bad things. This is the time to really heighten your spiritual connection, your practice, your prayer. You can't let yourself descend into anxiety and stress, because it will eat you alive. I sit here at my desk and put on some calming music so that I stay calm and centered. I use everything from the tool box that I have to help myself stay centered and present.

Alessia: Our focus this newsletter is inspired by the quote "The world came together as the people stayed apart." What type of support have you seen from the community during this difficult time?

Juan: I have to say that "The Imagine Society" has truly been an inspiration to me. ArchCare launched a social media campaign where they want us to use #togetherwecan to give and send messages. I contacted our marketing department and told them about The Imagine Society's #messagesoflove. We ask the question, "What can our volunteers do to help us?" and here you show up and tell us here is what The Imagine Society can do and will it work for you? That is a coming together that is so beautiful and meaningful. **I don't like to use the word 'social distancing'**

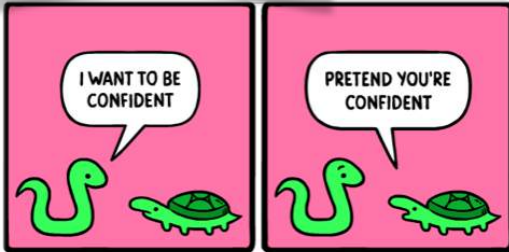
**because it's really "physical distancing." Socially we have to be connected**, like we are doing now. We are not in the same room, but we are connecting.

Using technology has been awesome and I've seen a tremendous coming together. We are all experiencing the same things. It's a unifying experience for humanity. For me that's the lesson of this time. On what you value, what's important. It's the spiritual, God connection. The One presence, the One power that we are all a part of. Ultimately, it can be a gift.

[Click here to read the full interview](#)

Follow Saint Patrick's Warriors on Instagram! @warrioryouthnyc

# FUN PAGES



THIS COMIC MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO OWEN LOPEZ ©MRLOVENSTEIN • MRLOVENSTEIN.COM



Junior  
Editor Katie  
Gaffigan (10)  
Marymount School  
of New York

Katie's  
Fave  
Memes  
:)

Lol!



That's it. You're all in timeout  
Until you can learn to get along



- God

'hey dude, wanna be my mohawk?'



'sweeeet'



THIS YEAR'S BEST FESTIVAL



GEMMA CORRELL 2016

COUCHELLA



# Can Anything Good Come Out Of This Pandemic?

by Katie Gaffigan (10) Marymount School of New York

## *I Think We're Alone Now...*

Parenthood might be around the corner for Ying Ying and Le Le, which are longtime residents of Ocean Park in Hong Kong. Zoo officials announced Monday that after 10 years not showing interest in getting together, the two have finally succeeded. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, the park has been closed to visitors since late January. Staff noticed certain behaviors in the two giant pandas that are common during breeding season, which occurs every year between March and May. This is big news in conservation efforts for the species that is currently listed vulnerable, one category away from being endangered, according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. There are only around 1,800 giant pandas that remain in their natural habitat, according to Ocean Park. If Ying Ying is pregnant, the gestation period for giant pandas ranges between 72 and 324 days. The zoo said it will be sharing updates on her journey to motherhood once more is known.

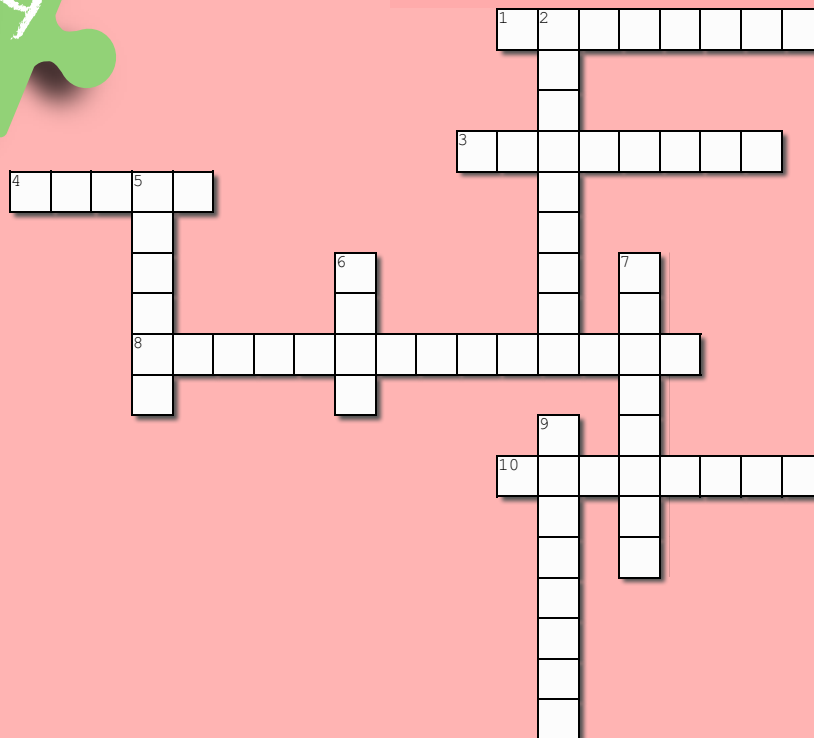


**MAYBE ALL THEY NEEDED WAS A LITTLE PRIVACY PEOPLE!**



## Imagine Crossword Puzzle

by Katie Gaffigan (10) Junior Editor!



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

### Across

1. cooperative labor done by a group
3. having the ability or power to invent or make something
4. belief in the honesty and reliability of others
8. responsibility to someone or for some activity
10. in contact with each other or in proximity

### Down

2. basic and fundamental
5. living together or enjoying life in communities
6. a connection that fastens things together
7. in an energetic manner
9. give an incentive for action