**2. Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side. (350 word max.)**

My emotions and experiences usually end up manifesting into music. I started playing the piano in kindergarten and participating in honor choirs and jazz ensembles in middle school. Since freshman year, I have had the opportunity to play music with students and teachers through my high school’s Singer-Songwriter Club. This club has provided an invaluable outlet for creative collaboration and expression and has inspired me to teach myself guitar. In a digital music class last year, I learned the skills to layer and arrange my voice with my own guitar and piano compositions. Now from the floor of my bedroom or the piano bench of a practice room, I spill my thoughts into song. Writing music has become an extension of my personality, and I can spend hours editing and recording.

Last winter I wrote, produced, and published an album of eleven original songs that I had been working on over the past two years. Titled *Listening to Rivers*, the album explores themes of environmental awareness, intuition, and individuality. The first song, “Human Child,” introduces my own feelings of insignificance and fear of a politically polarized world even though, as I sing, “we are one living soul, and we cannot live on our own.” The title song, “Listening to Rivers,” describes and personifies rivers as motherly guides for society to respect and follow: “Flowing through the mountainside, she is my only guide.” Music has taught me to listen to my surroundings, and songwriting has given me the ability to express what I find concerning and thought provoking.

Especially as a jazz vocalist, I find being articulate and having intention are crucial. The skills I have learned from singing with other musicians in the Monterey Jazz Festival and All-State Honor Jazz ensembles are applicable to more than just the realm of jazz. Improvising is liberating, but every note must be purposeful and in harmony with the key and chord changes. Songwriting frees me from monotony, for I am always in a constant state of improvisation and exploration. Songwriting allows me to listen to my intuition and be unapologetically and purposefully myself.