

# FRUIT SNACK SISTERS

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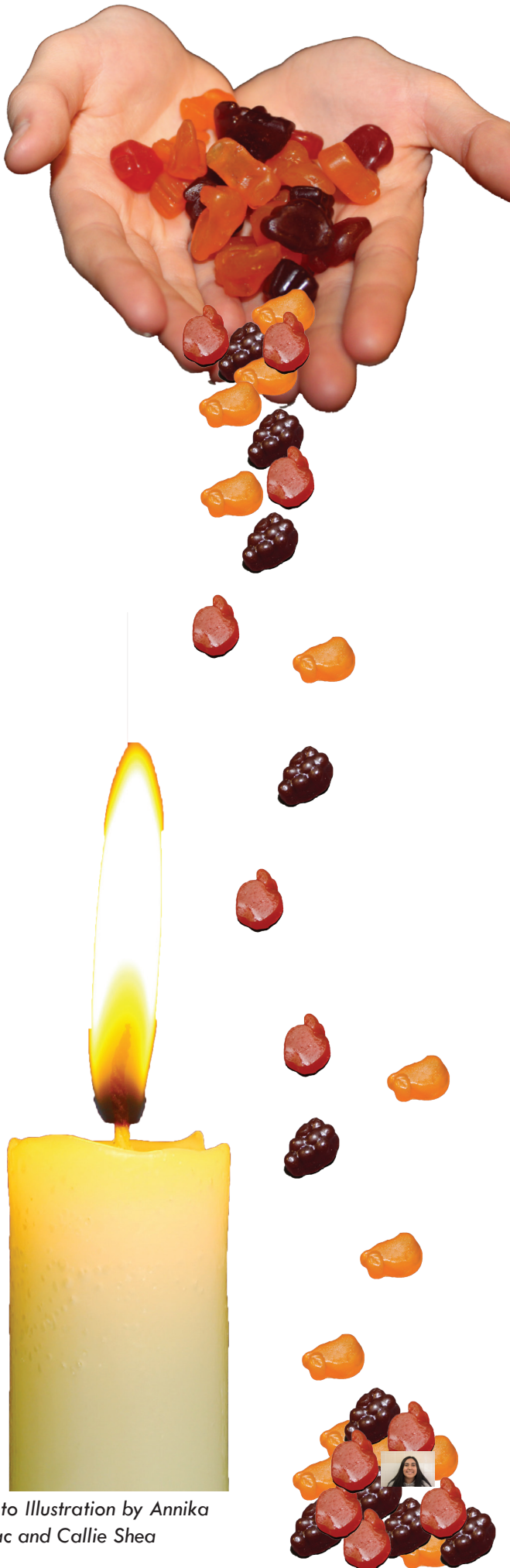


Photo Illustration by Annika Sisac and Callie Shea

Next to the diving boards a red candle flickers as club swim girls circle up for their annual swim ritual. Inseparable connections are made through goal sharing as the sweet smell of fruit juice and natural flavors floats in the air. A single Mott's fruit snack, their signature ritual ingredient, sits waiting on their right knee as the ritual commences.

The ritual starts out with the girls sharing their goals as they sit in a circle around a flickering candle. After they share their goals they blow out the single candle together and eat their fruit snack. Just like the variety of fruity shapes and flavors each girl's goal was unique to what they wanted to get out of their season.

"My goal was to have fun, swim fast and be positive," Riley Pope, freshmen swimmer, said.

In many sports connecting with other athletes is a major part of becoming a team, but since swim can be an individual sport, coming together by the light of the candle was an important and fun experience for these athletes.

"I think just because swim, what I've understood in the past, is that it hasn't really been known for its bonding," Pope said. "So the ritual was like a little bonding moment and like having everyone cheer everyone on and be positive, just to have fun I guess."

According to Sarah Guamer, a freshmen swimmer, this ritual set her season off right.

"I feel way more confident after talking to them about swimming. It's a good start to the meet," Guamer, said. "You have your goals in mind and you know everyone is there to support you and it's like a team bonding thing."

Becoming part of the team as a freshman is sometimes a challenging feat, but sitting by the candle with all those girls really made Guamer feel included.

"I'm a freshman and I felt really included because they wanted to do it with me," Guamer, said. "I feel like it's more for the freshmen now because you know we're just new swimmers and a lot of the club girls are freshmen."

According to Guamer the ritual was for the entire team of freshmen, not just the club girls who are very close.

"I don't think the ritual was just for club girls. There was like two or three girls that weren't club," Guamer, said.

For Pope, not only did she get to express her goals and connect with other swimmers but at the end of the ceremony, her favorite brand of fruit snack, Mott's, was waiting on her knee as the candle was blown out.

"It was kind of just a fun thing to do before a relay because we went and did relays which was mainly with those people. I mean it was mainly club girls, and we're pretty tight," Pope said.

The annual ritual was started by Taylor Kidd, a GJHS graduate, during her junior year in 2014. It started out as a ritual for the upperclassmen swimming that year but it has morphed into so much more. And the ritual lives on giving girls, according to Pope, a sweet way to get a snack and bond with the girls on their team right before they jump into the water.