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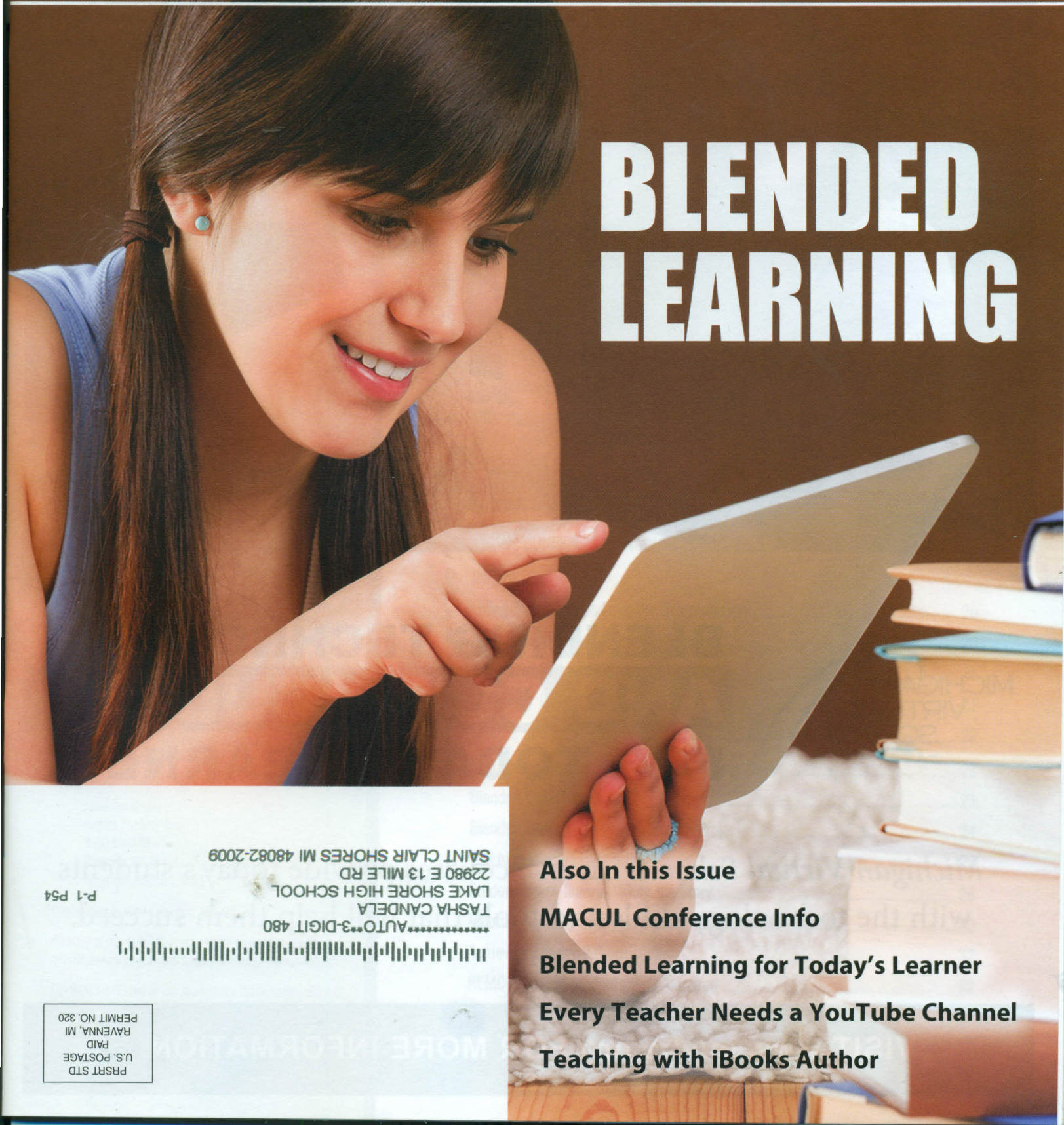
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By Mallory Burr,
High School Student

Discovering Self Through Web Design

I was born in June of 1995, in St. Clair Shores, Michigan. I've lived in the same house my entire life. Little has changed in my world of suburbia. Not much happens, and life is simple. I've always been a book worm, and spent a lot of time in front of a computer screen as well. When I took web design my sophomore year, I was excited to learn a few new things. As it would turn out, I absolutely loved the class. I took advanced web design my junior year, and fell harder. I discovered that this class that I so loved had, in a way, helped me find myself. I was forced to be more creative than I normally would be, and I learned that whether the websites I saw were created in Britain, China, Germany, or even Spain, the coding was the same language. And that made me feel as though I was connected to them. Though we speak in different tongues, our coding language is the same. My island of suburbia was not as isolated as I had previously thought.

Web design seemed like it'd be so simple. Just coding, learning what the symbols meant, and memorizing them. Well, that's what it is, isn't it? But I didn't imagine that it would be so intense. I had trouble at first, and I could never get the design to be what I wanted. By the time I'd entered my first advanced web design class, I had devoted countless hours to what I now look back on as a pretty sad website. I'd learned the basic codes,

and how to use my time. I knew that part of the advanced class was entering a web design contest, which I didn't really think I had a chance at. I poured my class and free time into a website and content that I was proud of. I'd spent a few weeks on my website until I decided to do a complete cosmetic overhaul, which occurred more than once.

I'd put so much time into my website, that by the time the contest rolled around, I was fairly proud. I remember getting dressed that morning and getting to the building where the contest finals were to be held. My parents had not been very involved in my website building, and were not very supportive. They didn't seem to have much hope for me getting too far in the contest, which made me question myself as well. I'd put so much time into it, and after months of convincing myself that I had something, it only took an hour to make me question myself again. By the time the winners were being announced, I'd pretty much convinced myself that I wasn't going to get anything. My heart leapt when I heard my name called for second place in the beginner category.

I guess that because I didn't expect it, it meant even more to me when I placed. I'd been proud of what I'd done, sure. But I'd hoped for maybe an honorable mention, but not a high rank. I'd worked so hard on my website, and I'd still sold myself short. My web design classes have taught me so much more than memorizing simple codes, like I had expected. I'd learned simple to advanced coding; I'd learned how to pace my time. I'd learned to stretch my creativity, how to convey my thoughts into images for my website and how important small details are. I even came to know myself better due to the experience. My web design classes taught me just how related everyone in the world really is. I think more than anything else though, they taught me the value of who I am, how important it is to believe in myself, and to push my boundaries.