

Happy 233rd birthday, U.S. Constitution

In 1829, approaching the end of his life, James Madison penned these powerful words in retrospect and in awe of what he helped create: “The happy Union of these States is a wonder; their Constitution a miracle; their example the hope of liberty throughout the world.”

On Sept. 17, 1787, Madison, commonly regarded as the Father of the U.S. Constitution, along with 38 other delegates to the constitutional convention, signed their names to the most important and influential document in American history.

Each year, on Sept. 17, we Americans are asked to take time from our busy lives to celebrate our Constitution. This year, the document is 233 years old. In that vast time span, it has been amended only 27 times — helping to illustrate why our government is the most stable of all democratized nations in the world.

The framers intentionally made the requirements for change difficult. Any proposed amendment must be approved by two-thirds of the House of Representatives; two-thirds of the Senate; and three-fourths of the state legislatures. It usually takes years, not months, to change the Constitution.

The two principles on which the constitutional articles are based — separation of powers and federalism — are just as important today as they were during the infancy of our great country.

Separation of powers reminds

us that there are three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. Neither branch is supposed to be more powerful than the other two.

Nancy Pelosi. Donald Trump. John Roberts. Constitutionally, they are equal. Federalism calls

GUEST
COMMENTARY



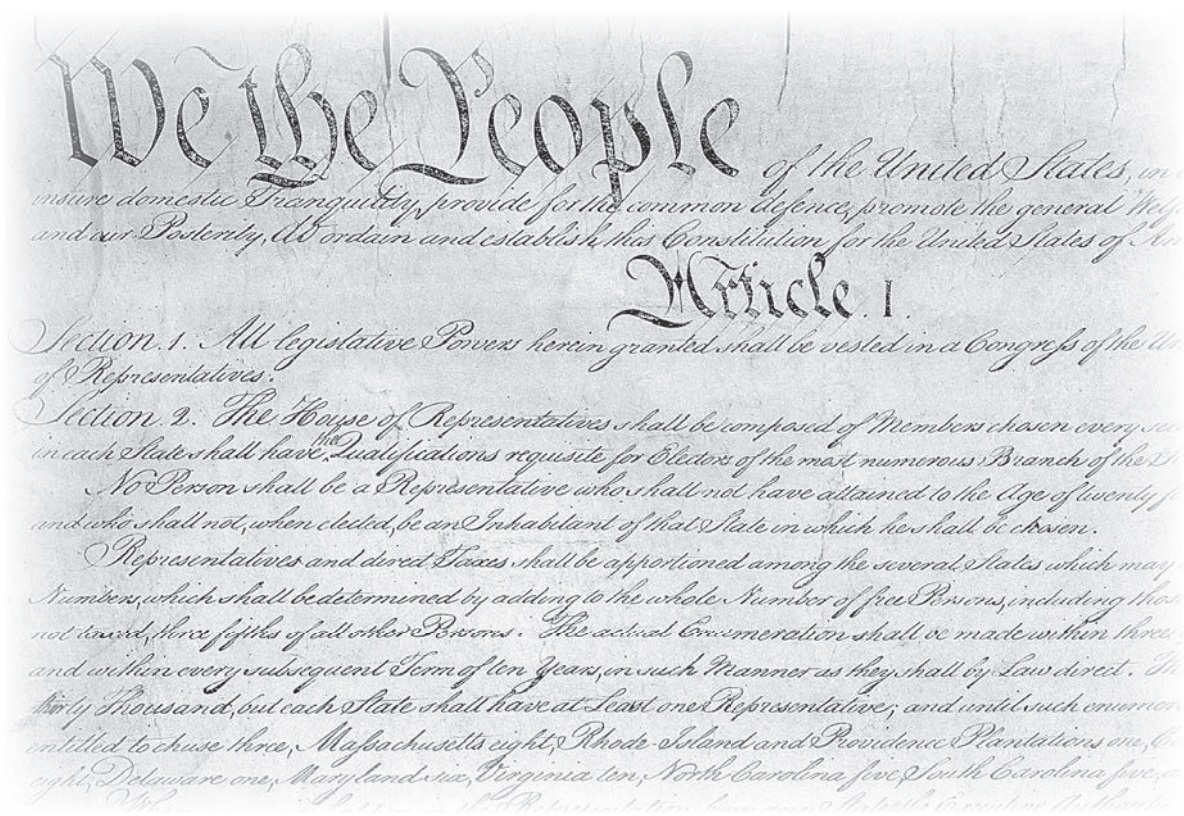
Mark
Muhich

on us to remember that our national government must share and divide power with the 50 states. Unlike many other nations in the world, state and local governments in America have legitimate and recognized authority to govern.

Besides being a document that separates power into equal branches and divides power between the national seat and its member states, the Constitution is also a declaration of a set of rights and liberties that citizens have. When the government attempts to exercise authority over its citizens, these rights and liberties often form the basis of some sort of litigation, whether that be in federal court or state court.

Thanks to Madison's many essays and speeches on the need for a Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments were ratified in 1791. Of these, the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Eighth amendments are implicated every time a person enters the criminal justice system.

Each day, I am honored to lead a team of 15 public defenders who serve courthouses in Carlton, Hibbing, and Virginia within the Sixth Judicial District. These constitutional criminal procedure amendments are to us



what hammer and nails are to a carpenter, or what a scalpel is to a surgeon. We serve as guardians of those rights and liberties when government exercises its authority by incarcerating, charging, trying, and sentencing people for criminal behavior.

Along with our colleagues who serve the other district courthouses in Duluth, Grand Marais, and Two Harbors, we strive to ensure that government wields its scepter fairly. Vigorous application of the criminal procedure amendments reduces the inequity and imbalance of power between the government and the governed.

Ultimately, the goal is to produce a better and fairer criminal justice system — from initial

point of contact with law enforcement to final point of contact with the sentencing judge.

I do not intend to minimize or dismiss the importance of keeping our communities safe.

Law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges have difficult jobs. I see it on a daily basis; however, so do we. I am reminded of a quote from former Attorney General Eric Holder, who served under President Obama, that is highly instructive and relevant, given what has happened across our country in the last year: “We must continue to come together — across aisles that divide counsel tables and political parties — to ensure that America has a criminal justice system that is worthy of its highest ideals.”

So, in conclusion, on this 233rd anniversary of our Constitution, let us take time from our day to honor, respect and revere it. And finally, let us not forget that because of the work of public defenders, using the Constitution as the tool of our trade, the imbalance of power between the government and the governed is reduced. And we all benefit from that.

Mark Muhich is the managing attorney for Northern St. Louis and Carlton counties, Sixth Judicial District Public Defender Office in Hibbing; and a former criminal justice and political science instructor at Mesabi Range College.

There are always surprises when putting garden to bed

Three nights of frost propelled us into motion. Our roomy veggie garden still had lots growing in it: squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, peppers, chard, kale, basil and other herbs. Green beans that have been bearing for eight weeks. Latecomer beets and carrots that didn't survive a first planting are now coming into their own.

So every evening, we spread out heavy plastic tarps over every square foot. Each morning, I'd uncover them, surprised at the moisture on the undersides and grateful to greet grinning, frost-surviving plants.

The garden was a project my Danish grandfather Renus (short for “Marinus”) and I created in the summer of 1973. His vintage garden had lost considerable sunshine as poplars grew high along the stretch between his land and Burlington Northern tracks. So we moved it to the north sun-facing side of the hayfields and started anew.

I loved learning from him how to grow veggies on a scale that would fill a winter root cellar. He especially loved little red pota-

atoes. For many summers — until he died in 1981 — I'd return from my college teaching jobs and spend time writing my research articles and joining him in the garden, making music with him (piano and fiddle), and visiting neighbors and cousins.

This was a challenging summer for gardens. We endured long dry spells during the crucial sprouting season and again in early August. Covid helped, with its unwelcome invitation to stay isolated and grounded — no airplane flights to see the grandkids. I watered late in the day or early in the morning.

But the surprises. Four cauliflowers, three of them huge, from tiny plants bought at Melanie Amundson's greenhouse near McGregor. Peas and beans that just wouldn't quit. Squash, cucumber and pumpkin vines climbing up over the pea wires. Funny seeing a butternut squash hanging primly from a sturdy wire. More delicious cherry tomatoes than I'd dreamed of. Dozens and dozens of green peppers, cored, sliced up and frozen for winter chili. Enough basil for

every Italian recipe I love. Lots of parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme to dry up for seasonings all year long.

We struggled, as ever, with purslane, which seems to love our land. If you leave any of it behind when weeding — a tiny leaf, a bit of root or stem — it will be back. Creeping Charlie used to be our biggest intruder, but it lies down and dies under the purslane.

Of course, the gardener always makes mistakes. I failed to find two zucchinis that grew 15 inches long and six inches in diameter. The solution, a recipe online for zucchini ripieni: Cut the overgrown squash in half the long way, dig out the seeds, chop up the good pulp leaving a half inch on all sides for the boat, saute onion and garlic in olive oil, add fresh parsley, basil, chunks of fresh tomato, tomato paste, pork sausage, bread crumbs, and salt and pepper, and bake. We've enjoyed two to three meals out of each of ours.

The garden doesn't dish up all the fruit of my grandfather's land. An enormous overgrown Dolgo crabapple tree, nearly 100 years old, would fill 30 big stovetop pots if we picked all the fruit. I



love climbing up a stepladder and filling big pot after pot. The small oblong crabs are a burnished deep red verging on purple. I can shake an entire limb, and three dozen will fall onto my head, into the pot, or onto the ground. Nearby, a conventional crabapple provides the makings for wonderful applesauce.

In the kitchen, I haul out the Meju Maija that Rod bought me years ago, a Finnish invention. You fill a large first layer with water, place the juice catcher with the internal chimney (for the steam to rise up) and its spigot and tube on top of that, and place your crabapples in the top bucket with its clear glass cover. Then for most of an hour, you watch as the steam traveling through the chimney from the lowest pot rises to make a juicy mush out of the apples. From the tube, you fill sterilized quarts full of deep red juice.

Days later, I make a batch or two of crabapple jelly, tart and rosy red in pint or half-pint jars.

I love time spent in the garden. This summer, our neighbor girls Brandy and Amber Collman worked with me most weekday mornings planting, weeding, thinning, stringing pea lines, harvesting, cleaning veggies and fruits, making pickles, cooking up midday meals, and stuffing our freezer. Willing and efficient gardeners, they make a big contribution to the quality of our lives, especially since going out to eat is not easy under Covid. And, well, I like to cook.

Ann Markusen is an economist and professor emerita at University of Minnesota. A Pine Knot board member, she lives in Red Clover Township north of Cromwell with her husband, Rod Walli.

Child labor offers lessons for life

A good economist colleague and friend of mine, University of Minnesota professor Deborah Levison, has spent more than 20 years studying child labor around the world. Despite many laws formally forbidding child labor, Levison's research finds that children are working all around the world, including in our own region.

She's teamed up with photographer David Parker who has, over many years, captured hundreds of them on film. Levison and historian MJ Maynes have curated a virtual exhibit of the photos, which you can visit online.

I remember visiting Egypt in the 1990s with my 16-year-old son David. In a rickety railroad car travelling south along the Nile, we watched families walking out into the cane fields with their children. My son asked me: "Why aren't they in school?" It was a perfect opportunity to speak about rural poverty and the nature of agricultural work.

Levison has developed a nuanced view of child labor. She argues while it is a necessity for many low-income families, it can also be a great training ground, preparing kids for work life and helping them understand how economies function. Work for pay or income is — for young people everywhere — combined with schooling. Of course, it can be exploitative as well. For that reason, the U.S. and many other countries have historically prohibited child labor.

We've all experienced and observed child labor in our own society. In farm families like those of my husband and friend June Collman, boys and girls alike milked cows, pastured them, raised chickens, collected and cleaned eggs, and helped with the plowing and haying. In cities, some of us delivered daily papers. I had a secret garden in

a swamp near our Minneapolis home where, coached by my father, I raised beans and other veggies, selling them to neighbors for a pittance per bag. I was proud of my beans.

ON THE MARK



Ann Markusen

In high school, my parents encouraged us to work for spending money. I landed a job at Perkins, then strictly a pancake house, in my neighborhood. I worked evenings and most of the day on Sunday, starting early in the morning.

I had the lowliest job: setting silverware, napkins and filled water glasses on the tables. On Sunday mornings, our busiest, I had to refill the syrup pitchers we placed on each table. I hefted big tin cans full of maple, apricot and blueberry syrup to refill each type of pitcher before they all went through the dishwasher. By early afternoon, when the church crowds had happily departed, I would walk home, my hair and fingernails thoroughly sticky.

On weekends, I also babysat for pay.

Working as children — even if it's unpaid chores like dishes, lawn mowing and shoveling — creates respect for the challenges and quality of work, and pride in good results. By the time we were teens, our parents paid us something for these — I don't remember how much. Deborah offers a wonderful quote from an American farm kid: "Dear Sir or Madam: I am 11 years old. I am writing to ask you to not pass the proposed rule changes for children working on farms. Because we can learn stuff and it seems like you need to learn before you are a teenager or you don't want to learn. It is fun to work on the farm. I like working with animals and it keeps me out of trouble and you get to explore."

My son, David, was eager to work at age 16. He first worked for our modestly-sized public



University of Minnesota professor Deborah Levison has spent more than 20 years studying child labor. She's teamed up with photographer David Parker, who captured this newspaper seller in India. For more of their work, visit "Seeing Child Labor" at gallery.lib.umn.edu/exhibits/show/seeingchildlabor.

library, where his afterschool job was shelving books. He came home after the first week and complained, sticking his lower lip out. "I'm working under five layers of women, and they don't get along with each other." I replied: "Well, welcome to the sociology of the workplace."

He went on to work at temp jobs like restocking shelves at some version of Office Max and, in a high school semester off in Washington D.C., shelving videos for a television station.

All of these were minimum wage jobs. During college, he worked for a summer on a fiber optics assembly line in suburban Minneapolis, where all of his co-workers were men of color. The next Christmas, he ignored a "no" to a request for time off, came home for the celebration and returned to find he had no job.

Levison's research and Parker's photos provide remarkable windows into children's work

around the world, rural and urban. A picture is, truly, worth a thousand words. I encourage you to view the virtual exhibit. Share it with your kids, your friends. Talk with others about their work experiences, help younger people understand the upsides and downsides of the many occupations possible. And that they can change jobs, whether in the same occupation or leaving one that dissatisfies for another. Above all, these photos help place us alongside, for the viewing moments, the millions of children worldwide who are working at young ages. From them, we learn about their economies, the ubiquity of poverty worldwide, and the awesome spirit of young people working under challenging circumstances.

Ann Markusen is an economist and professor emerita at University of Minnesota. She is a Pine Knot board member.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thankful for governor who looks out for us

In response to last week's letter accusing the governor of trampling people's "God-given" rights in the name of protecting them from the coronavirus, I'm sure glad the author doesn't control my life. Because I want a life, post-pandemic.

Some folks who get Covid-19 and live will still struggle with long-lasting effects. They can get small blood clots that end up in the lungs, heart, liver and brain. Some have lost limbs and fingers because of this virus. Who knows what other long-term effects may come as a result of getting it? Is that the kind of life a person wants to live?

I want life, liberty and the right to pursue happiness in a healthy body, but I would have much less of a chance of that if I got the virus from someone who refuses to wear a mask or keep their distance to protect others.

Too many people today don't actually listen to the news, they just ignore what they don't want to hear. I say, read and actually try to learn instead of just complaining. We are blessed to have a governor who cares about all the people and not just himself. I'm glad our governor supports Minnesotans and the healthy development of our children, as well as our economy and our God-given rights to life as human beings.

Peggy Anderson, Cloquet

Let your voice be heard by following these basic guidelines:

- Letters to the editor should be under 300 words.
- Commentaries should be kept to around 600 words.
- Items dealing with local issues will take first priority.
- Letters over the word limits will be edited at the discretion of the editor.
- Any reader comments should be respectful.
- The editor has the right to edit for clarity, grammar, style, libel and length.

Send your thoughts to: news@PineKnotNews.com

Pine Knot
News

LETTERS TO Santa

Write a letter to Santa and we will share them!
All letters received by Dec. 18 will be published in the Christmas edition of the Pine Knot News.

Please take a cell phone picture of handwritten letters and send them to news@pineknotnews.com. Parents can also transcribe letters (original spelling, punctuation and all) and email the text. To go old-school, mail letters to: Pine Knot News, 122 Avenue C, Cloquet MN 55720



It's time to consider prison rates

Once again, husband Rod Walli and I headed out to clear the Fond du Lac Forest cross-country ski trail of annual downfalls and upstart saplings. Once again, the Willow River Challenge Incarceration Program men and Sgt. Steve Whited joined us. I introduced myself — masked just like they were — to each man and thanked him for his work.

On the trails we encountered more downfalls than usual.

But we managed to get the A to B trails and the way back to the parking lot cleared. It helped that Rod brought his chainsaw. He worked his way down through dozens of poplar and pine downfalls averaging a foot and a half in girth, some much larger. Alongside him, the CIP men hefted each chunk and flung it into the surrounding woods. Others used pruners and loppers to cut off the saplings at ground level.

Readers may remember that the CIP was on the chopping block this year, along with a similar one in Togo. The Minnesota Department of Corrections was expected to undertake its share of cost cutting given state budget shortfalls. It was quite a battle.

In Carlton County, where many CIP employees live and shop, the city of Moose Lake hosted a large rally in August to oppose the closing. Area politicians, from the mayor of Moose Lake to our state legislators, gave passionate speeches about the value of the program to our communities. Eventually, after

many a special session, the DOC and the state legislature found a way to fund Willow River and Togo. At least for another year, the programs continue.

On the DOC website, you can find current prisoner data for Willow River. As of Dec. 7, the program housed 77 offenders. They range in age from 22 to 57, some 43 percent of them in the 26 to 35 age range. The majority are white, 22 percent are African American, and 13 percent are American Indian. I enjoy meeting and working with these men.

I introduce myself to each one and learn their names.

Lately, I've been following the growing movement among states, the federal government and counties to close prisons. They are expensive, they can be dangerous, and in this time of Covid, they may be disease breeding grounds. Many states, including Oklahoma and California, have released prisoners early this year, prompted by Covid but also by changes in both public sentiment and the fiscal costs of large-scale, long-term incarceration.

In Minnesota, Ramsey County — home to our state capitol in St. Paul — has been a leader in reducing incarceration numbers. A Star Tribune article on Nov. 29 by Shannon Prather reported that Ramsey County cut the number of people sent to prison by nearly half in the past decade, in sharp contrast to state and neighboring metro counties. A thoughtful column by our

... in 1969, the national crime rate was 3,680 per 100,000 population. The incarceration rate was 97 state and federal prisoners per 100,000 population. Today, the crime rate is 3,667 but the incarceration rate is five times higher, at 492 per 100,000.

publisher, Pete Radosevich, in the July 5 issue of the Pine Knot News, argued that Carlton County should not take on an expensive new jail project without first implementing reform ideas.

The U.S. prison population has grown substantially in the past 40 years. The Sentencing Project, a research and advocacy group, reports that in 1969, the national crime rate was 3,680 per 100,000 population. The incarceration rate was 97 state and federal prisoners per 100,000 population. Today, the crime rate is 3,667 but the incarceration rate is five times higher, at 492 per 100,000. High rates of incarceration, they conclude, lead to poor outcomes for communities.

Across the nation, policymakers and criminal justice stakeholders are increasingly exploring other policy options.

It's an achievement that public protest, our area politicians' advocacy, and a lot of elbow grease helped to reverse the decision to close Willow River and Togo programs. It makes good sense, because this first-time offender program reduces recidivism substantially. We have to be ready for a

second-round fight to keep the CIP funded. Covid shutdowns of offices, plants, and retailers, and high rates of unemployment have decimated revenues from taxes that normally fund state public sector programs.

Most of us know little about the overall effectiveness of our state prison system. How high are rates of recidivism? How do per inmate costs vary across our state prison system? Are sentences too severe? Are offenders in higher security prisons whose crimes are comparable to those in the CIP more or less apt to re-offend?

Most of us don't know much about how our state's prison sector works, what it costs, and whether it makes our communities safer and how. Let's make greater visibility and scrutiny of incarceration budgets, programs and effectiveness in reducing crime.

I hope to be out on the trails with the CIP for years to come.

Ann Markusen is an economist and professor emerita at University of Minnesota. She lives north of Cromwell. Rod Walli.

ON THE MARK



Ann Markusen

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Help, and pray for our medical workers

The news covers the number of Covid-19 cases each day, the number of deaths occurring and the pleas of caregivers to the public about following the simple guidelines of wearing masks, social distancing, avoiding crowds, etc.

The thing that bothers me the most is the strain and burden on the medical people, first responders and others that have to deal with the public. The medical people have my deepest respect, sympathy and concern for their health and welfare.

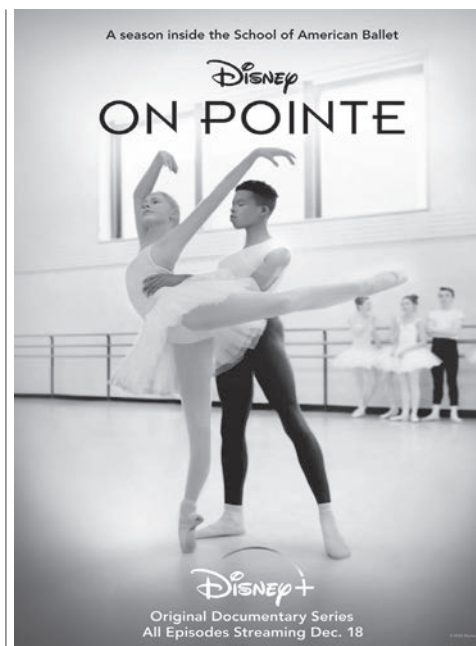
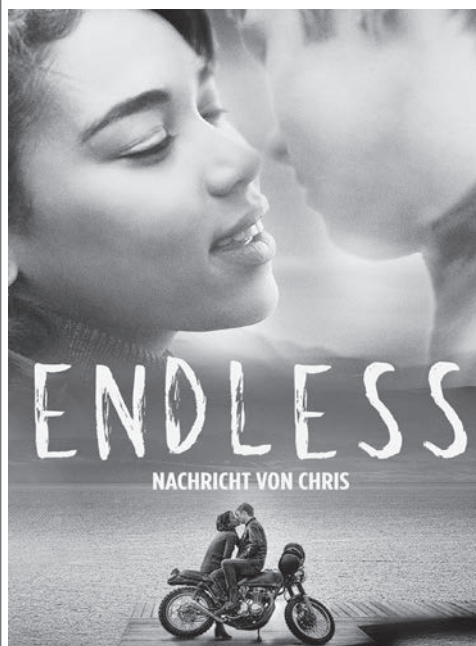
Nurses especially have to deal with the individual cases during their shift at the hospital constantly, and then go home to their families. I've noticed nurses on TV making pleas to the public about wearing masks and avoiding crowds to cut down on the number of cases. The hospitals are getting filled not only with Covid-19 cases, but the other usual physical and emotional problems. For example, annually there are over 650,000 deaths from heart attacks over and above the deaths by cancer and other health problems.

As a former first responder and presently a caregiver, I understand the emotional and physical strain on a person. My prayers are for all the people fighting the Covid situation: for encouragement, comfort, safety, and strength to fight the battle raging in our society. May God richly bless them all.

Ralph Yrjanson, Cloquet

The STREAM Scene

Where all the top choices can be found in one place!



"The Expanse"
The sci-fi drama series returns for its 10-episode fifth season and finds a reckoning coming due for the crew of the Rocinante and the leaders of the Inner Planets and the Belt, as the past and present converge, bringing forth personal challenges that have wide-reaching repercussions throughout the solar system. Wes Chatham, Dominique Tipper, Steven Strait, Cas Anvar and Frankie Adams are among cast returns. (ORIGINAL)

"Movie: Endless"
Scott Speer ("Step Up Revolution," "Midnight Sun") directed this 2020 fantasy drama about high school sweethearts who find a way to reunite even after a tragic car accident claims the life of the boyfriend (Nicholas Hamilton, "Captain Fantastic"). Alexandra Shipp ("X-Men: Apocalypse"), DeRon Horton, Ian Tracey and Famke Janssen are also in the cast.

"The Surgeon's Cut"
This four-episode documentary series follows four groundbreaking surgeons as they perform innovative operations and procedures and reflect on their lives and professions, thus providing a unique window into the world of surgery. Specialty areas featured here include neurosurgery, transplant surgery, fetal medicine and cardiology. (ORIGINAL)

"On Pointe" (Dec.18, Disney+)
From Imagine Entertainment and executive producers Ron Howard, Brian Grazer, Sara Bernstein and Justin Wilkes comes this six-part documentary series that follows the lives of students ages 8-18 as they pursue their dreams and train at the world renowned School of American Ballet in New York City. **How to watch: www.disneyplus.com (\$6.99/mo.)**