

AMAZING KID

Haleigh Freier



Making a difference one child at a time!

110° Amazing Kid (September)

Haleigh Freier — An Amazing Kid

By Laura Page

Diane Freier nominated Haleigh to be this issue's Amazing Kid because Diane said that for the past seven years she has watched her stepdaughter overcome disabilities and discouragements, developing into a focused young lady with a bright future.

Sixteen-year-old Haleigh attends Freedom High School as a junior.

Diane said that Haleigh breaks the pattern of amazing girls who appear in this column, many of whom had stories that included such things as popular personalities and athletic prowess. Haleigh, on the other hand, has had to labor to overcome great adversity. She is intelligent and has always maintained good grades in school. However, she has coordination problems and struggles to speak clearly. A specialist recently confirmed that Haleigh is suffering from autism.

Her obvious problems made it difficult for Haleigh to socialize and to easily form friendships; her struggles frequently made her the object of other students' cruel derision and scornful laughter. But Diane said that through all her difficulties Haleigh always managed to retain a positive outlook on life, as well as a loving attitude towards the people around her. She never permitted the bullying and teasing of others to deter her from her dreams.

Her step mom testified to Haleigh's struggles with life. Before the doctor's diagnosis, Haleigh came to understand that her symptoms matched the description and examples of autism.

Diane and Haleigh discussed Haleigh's disabilities and developed strategies to respond to the challenges confronting the courageous young woman.

Together Diane and Haleigh learned about autism; they conducted research using information from articles and books, as well as viewing educational TV shows and discussing information they were able to glean from Internet websites.

The diagnosis together with the research they conducted provided liberating insights helping Haleigh to understand herself and to accept her situation. The emerging sense of self-awareness fueled a determination on Haleigh's part not to let her disabilities stand in the way of her dreams.

Haleigh always spoke about all the ideas that kept chasing each other around in her head, but because of the effect that autism had on her speech and communication, she always found it difficult to express her ideas to others. But then she discovered that the medium of writing permitted her to control the pace of communication, giving her time to reflect upon what she wanted to say and enabling her to choose the words and phrases that would exactly capture the meaning and content of whatever she was trying to communicate.

Haleigh focused her intelligence and creative energies in writing a novel. She has completed an adventure story with the fervent hope of some day having it published, and then plans to use her success as an example to encourage other children with disabilities.

May each of us come to the awareness of our own limitations, the wisdom to understand how to cope with them, and the courage to move past them in order to accomplish something good in this world. Let us determine to follow the example of Haleigh Freier, this month's Amazing Kid.

Send any opinion about the article to editors@110mag.com.

Do you know an "Amazing Kid" between the ages of five and 18 years old that is worthy of this award?

To Nominate an "Amazing Kid" go to www.110mag.com and click on The Amazing Kid Nomination link.

