



Making a difference one child at a time!

110° Amazing Kid (June) Sarah Cronk — An Amazing Kid By Laura Page

Linda Mullen nominated her daughter, Sarah Cronk, as the Amazing Kid for the June issue of our magazine. Even though she is only 16 years old, Sarah helped to form what might be the first high school based cheerleading squad in the United States, created expressly for students with special needs. This remarkable Iowa teenager then went on to establish a non-profit corporation called The Sparkle Effect, Inc. to inspire, motivate, and instruct other high school cheerleading squads across the country to create similar groups.

Linda, one of her daughter's most ardent fans, has thrown herself into support of her daughter's efforts. She is a member of the corporation's Board of Directors.

Linda said that the inspiration for the Sparkle Effect, and a phenomenal vision for serving special needs children in this way, are resulting from Sarah's passionate belief in the power that teens hold within their own hands of changing their world. She is committed to the role that teenagers can play in helping other teens.

Linda said that her daughter works tirelessly on behalf of students with special needs. She created the Spartan Sparkles cheerleading squad this past summer. They cheered at several high school football and basketball games and brought home the Gold Medal from for the Cheerleading Competition from March's Special Olympics.

Linda reports that Sarah is now focusing her time, energy, and resources on the mission and program of her Sparkle Effect Corporation, working towards the goal of growing the Sparkles program in other Iowa high schools as well as schools across the nation.

Sarah's awareness of the social challenges faced by special needs children has its source in her own family circle because her brother, Charlie, who is one year older than her, is a special needs student at Sarah's high school. She has watched the struggles of her socially motivated and sweet-natured sibling in successfully navigating the social currents of the school's culture.

Sarah was able to observe first-hand how important it was to Charlie's healthy social development that his peers accept and include him in their activities. Charlie is being mainstreamed in the school's academic program, and it was essential that he be mainstreamed into the school's society and culture, as well.

Last year Charlie qualified as a member of the high school swim team. Sarah could see the importance of the resulting opportunities for physical exercise that came her brother's way, but she also saw how even more important were the friendships that he was able to forge with his teammates. That exercise was great; those relationships priceless!

Sarah has learned the important lesson that everyone benefits by truly opening minds and hearts to those with differences. Her activities on behalf of special needs teenagers is much more effective than any act of mere charity could possibly be. She's not simply doing a favor for teenagers with special needs, but has managed to experience herself the life-giving passions associated with team-bonding, friendship, and acceptance. All these transformational effects resulted from the simple act of giving equal opportunities to everyone to participate in high school extracurricular activities.

Sarah is learning the necessity of doing with great diligence the difficult tasks that are required to realize the goals that she has set for her Sparkle Effect Corporation.

We salute Sarah Cronk as this month's Amazing Kid. We're impressed with how the standards of equal opportunity and the embracing of diversity that are central to her vision reflect two of the highest ideals upon which our nation itself was founded.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO WWW.SPARTANSPARKLES.COM OR TO WWW.THESPARKLE.EFFECT.ORG, OR EMAIL SARAH.CRONK@THESPARKLEEFFECT.ORG.

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?

The Amazing Kid Nomination Deadline is June 30, 2009.

(Entries received after the deadline will be considered for the subsequent issue of 110° Magazine.)

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

