

## **NJCFSA 2007 HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP WINNER**



**Ashley Ozery**

Ever since I was young, I dreamed big. Fantastic notions of the future filled my head and I changed my "career" as often as my clothing. People always told me that if I worked hard, I could achieve anything.

Unfortunately for me, merely working hard was not an option. When I was twelve years old, I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. That diagnosis was accompanied by that of Pertussis (Whooping Cough) and the Epstein-Barr virus. Finding out this debilitating illness was probably going to last many years was devastating to me as a child.

Still, I realized I could not let this stop me from achieving greatness. I would just have to work harder. I struggled with many subjects in school, especially mathematics. Despite my weakness in this subject, I have taken math every year, even beyond the requirements. Today I am in Advanced Placement Statistics. My struggle has been very important to me, and despite the hardships I've faced, I'm glad things have worked out the way they have. If I had the power to change my past, I would not. I would simply not be the person I am today. It is important to face adversity. As the wise old adage states, life's not fair. Learning this lesson early prepared me for life's challenges, both academic and physical.

Despite my imperfect health, I volunteer with the Englishtown-Manalapan First Aid Squad, helping those with medical issues far worse than my own. It truly puts life in perspective. It would have been so easy to wallow in bitterness and self-pity. Instead, I feel lucky to be alive and don't take a single moment for granted.

This fall, I'm going to Lehigh University as an International Relations major. My ultimate goal is diplomacy - as previously stated, I will continue to dream big. The lessons I've learned these past six years cannot be taught in any classroom. I've learned to struggle, and to win.

Life will never be easy - not for me, not for anyone. I do, however, have an advantage by knowing this already. I am ready to take on the world. My dreams continue even after my ever-so-frequent sleep ceases. While I hope I'll need less rest in the future, I'll never stop dreaming.