



Marissa Newell - 2010 HS Scholarship Winner 2010 Special Award

During her years as a Youth Trustee, Marissa raised over \$23,000 by conducting gift auctions annually for six years. Her commitment is amazing. She applied for this scholarship as graduating senior, along with her peers. The board of trustees decided to honor her by presenting her with a special edition of the award - A special award for a special person.

I am a believer in working hard to achieve my goals and making a difference during my lifetime. At the age of six, I was diagnosed with Lyme disease. By eight, the doctors added several more diagnoses including Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS), Fibromyalgia, and eventually Pseudo-tumor Cerebri. Through all of it, I had a mother, various family members, several close friends, some teachers and a few of my doctors that were extremely supportive. They were the source from which I gained a positive attitude and the belief that I can set my mind to do something, follow through, and achieve my goal. Sometimes, it took longer or had to be done in untraditional ways, but I learned that it could always be done.

CFIDS and Lyme disease affect a person both physically and cognitively. Though at times it has been frustrating to deal with these symptoms, I have learned never to let them stop me. I've learned to use various ways of overcoming the symptoms to the best of my ability in order to achieve my goals. Throughout high school with the support of those around me and my own hard work, I have been able to maintain a 94 GPA. This has not always been easy. However, it was important in helping me to achieve my goals.

My mother taught me from an early age how important it is to give within the community through allowing me, from the age of 6, to help sort and wrap presents to be given to children through the Toys for Tots program. She explained that this was a way for children to have an opportunity to celebrate a holiday that family circumstances may not have otherwise provided. She taught me that we receive many gifts of our own through giving to others. There were always ways we could make a difference regardless of our own circumstances.

At the age of twelve, I was required to do a community service project for my Bat Mitzvah. I chose to run a gift auction that would benefit the N.J. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Association Research and Medical School Scholarship Funds. I have now made this an annual event. I spent a long time believing that there was nothing I could do about my illness. This event has not only raised money for an important cause but also allowed me to do something about an illness over which I previously felt that I had no control. To date, I have raised more than \$20,000 for the organization. I have also become a youth trustee with the organization. These two activities have allowed me the ability to make a difference through advocacy, education and research about the illness. There is always something that can be done and this is my way of giving back for all that the organization does for its members.

Through all of this, I learned that, for me, it is always important to help others along the way. When I first became ill, the people around me helped me to understand the illness and the limitations that it sometimes brought, ~~on~~ but most importantly the abilities it provided me. From the time I was two, my mother worked for an agency that serves people with disabilities. Here, I learned something that some people never do...to see beyond the disability to the person inside. I learned to see and appreciate all the qualities and abilities that the person had regardless of disability. I became involved in much of my community service as a result of this. I have been assisting with teaching dance to teens and young adults with disabilities for the last four years. I also became involved with the summer camp at which speech therapy and assistive technology are used to help with communication. This experience has taught me more than I ever could have taught the participants. Through this, I have learned patience, understanding, and a true appreciation for each individual and their unique abilities. I learned that there are many ways for a person to express themselves, and speech is just one of them.

My hope is to become a Bi-lingual Speech Pathologist with an Assistive Technology Certificate. My experience with community service had led me to believe that this is the way in which I can best benefit myself and others, and a belief that I will accomplish my goals.

As a result of my illnesses and the related medical bills, my mother, a single parent has been unable to save for my college education. I know that college will be a challenge for me with my own physical limitations at time. I look forward to the challenge. My belief is that we must always look beyond the limitations presented and meet the challenges. I have set my mind in meeting my goals in the past and always accomplish each of them. College will give me the same type of opportunity. My desire to help others overcome their limitations and meet the challenges in life will far outweigh any obstacles I may face.

“We choose to go...not because [it is] easy, but because [it is] hard, because that goal will serve to measure and organize the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”

-John Fitzgerald Kennedy