



# TRAVELER

*Highlighting our students' travels on the road to success*

## PARLIN SPOTLIGHTS ONE STUDENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

Stephanie has been a student at New Road School in Parlin since 2001 from the age of nine years old. She was born with a host of medical conditions, which ultimately led doctors to believe she would not survive. With severe renal disease and Autism, she was homebound and considered medically fragile at the age of five. Due to her compromised immune system Stephanie must follow a restrictive diet, hygiene precautions, and take medications on a regular schedule. Even with all of these challenges Stephanie has not let her disabilities stop her and in turn has used her strengths to give back to society and help others with different challenges.

Stephanie is well aware of her needs; what she can and cannot eat, and what she is allowed to do while in school and at home. Here at New Road School, Stephanie has had a one-to-one assistant who makes sure her medical needs are met. Stephanie's parents have kept her involved not only with her own issues, but volunteering for charities and organizations to help other people in similar situations.

Stephanie started helping others by donating educational toys to Prevention Education Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to the safety and well-being

of children, and therapy items to the Special Education Department at Hamilton Schools. She is also very active in Our Lady of Sorrows Youth Group. She has donated to food drives,



wrote letters, and made bracelets for children in Uganda, served meals to the homeless at St. Mary's Church, and made lunches for TASK (Trenton Area Soup Kitchen).

Stephanie is also involved with NAMI Kids (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill), which makes baby blankets for Robert Wood Johnson Hospital. She also decorates mental health centers and nursing homes, creates backpacks for Homefront Children, and prepares holiday baskets for children in DYFS (Division of Youth and Family Services). Stephanie has hosted

events for NAMI Kids as well as Lifespire (an autism respite program).

One of Stephanie's greatest accomplishments is her own website where people can sponsor and donate money to the National Kidney Foundation (NKF). As an active member she has participated in walks for NKF as well as NAMI and Autism Speaks.

For National Disability Mentor Day she volunteered at the Hamilton Animal Shelter, Allies/Progressive Center for Independent Living office, and Staples.

Stephanie has received many awards in recognition of her volunteer work. She and other students were invited to attend the Hamilton Mayor's lunch to honor their work in the community. Stephanie has also appeared on News Channel 12 NJ, in the Star Ledger Newspaper, and Lawrence Toyota's newsletter in "Time For Advancing Opportunities".

When asked why she likes helping people, Stephanie replied, "because if I help people they feel much more happier". All of these activities are important for Stephanie for character education, self-esteem, and future employment experience.