

# Brain Aneurysm

by Daniel Trush

On March 9, 1997, while playing basketball, an unexpected experience changed my life forever. I had a brain aneurysm, an abnormal widening of a vein or artery in the brain. One-third of the people who experience this die before they go to the hospital, one-third die after they go to the hospital, and one-third survive. I was one of the lucky who survived, but this traumatic brain injury left me in a coma for thirty days. When I woke up, I discovered that I was paralyzed from the waist down and could no longer talk. At first, I could only communicate through blinking. One blink meant yes and two blinks meant no. I spent a total of three hundred and forty one days in the hospital and had to go through extensive rehabilitation, which taught my body how to walk, talk and use my arms again.

This ordeal was a very long and difficult experience. Despite all of the difficulties I had to face, I always try to look at the bright side of things and cherish every day. This perspective gave me the strength to deal with and overcome many obstacles. Not only did I overcome major barriers, I have also come out a better person. I was able to accomplish many things that even the doctors didn't think I'd be able to do. I have been able to participate in many long distance races and have gotten the opportunity to play with sick children at Beth Israel Hospital. I graduated high school in June and will be attending Hunter College this fall. These are all achievements that once seemed so impossible, but I was able to accomplish through believing in my abilities.

Through my years of dealing with my disability and struggling to accomplish my goals I found strength and inspiration in hearing the stories of others who have overcome their own disabilities and have accomplished extraordinary things. One man I was most inspired by was Franklin D. Roosevelt who at the age of 41 was crippled by polio. I felt a close connection with him because just like me, he dealt with the realities of paralysis and rehabilitation. He also didn't let those obstacles get in the way of what he really wanted to do. After his illness, he was elected governor of New York and then later became president. Hearing the stories of people such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, gives me the strength to deal with the many obstacles I have had to overcome. The greatest lesson I have learned is that with hard work, determination, and faith in yourself there is nothing you cannot accomplish.



# HOW TO FIND THE PERFECT...

## COLLEGE MATCH!

By Elena Anadolis

What is the college process like for someone who has a disability?

It is pretty similar to that of someone who is an athlete. While they are looking at the quality of the sports program and how accommodating their professors and coaches are I had to look for the schools ability to meet my needs and make sure the professors would be willing to work with me. Just like any typical teenager you want to look for a school that makes you feel comfortable and meets all of your needs. In my case, I looked for a school that concentrated in law because i would like to be an attorney/advocate for the disabled. Since I have cerebral palsy I needed to look for schools that would have specific accommodations to meet my needs. For example, because i need a cane or a wheelchair for mobility I looked for a campus that was small and easy to get around. Outside of physical mobility I also have special learning needs. The college needed to be able to provide me with visual magnification, extended time for tests and computer modifications. While schools are often able to meet your educational needs, the bigger problem lies in finding a school that is also able to meet your individual physical needs. Meeting my physical needs is much more than just providing ramps and elevators. It is also the more minute things, such

as automatic door openers, curb cuts, wider doors and arrangement of the classroom furniture for wider pathways. These things are often overlooked by the colleges when telling people that their school is accessible.

What questions should someone ask when considering what school to choose?

The biggest issue is accessibility. If you are unable to navigate the school campus you will not be successful academically, even if you have all of your educational needs met. You should not only ask the school disability office if they are able to meet your needs but also find others on campus who have a disability. Since they are using the disability office services they will give you the most honest answer as to how you will be treated.

What advice would you give to others who have a disability and are planning to apply to schools?

Start early!! I cannot emphasize this enough. In my opinion the ideal time to start the college search is in ninth grade.

Remember not only do you have to find a school that makes you feel comfortable and has your ideal major, you also have to keep in mind that it must meet your special physical and academic needs as well. You should also start talking to your high school guidance counselor early. Mine were unable to help me because while I started look at the same time as all my peers, the counselors were unfamiliar with how to go about finding universities that would best cater to my physical and educational needs. Unfortunately for me, I was unable to began looking before that because in tenth grade I had to have reconstructive hip surgery. I spent February through June in rehabilitation recovering. During those four months I was able to continue taking my classes and successfully passed all the regents administered to me in the hospital, but during this time I was unable to look at colleges. Maybe if I had been in school during this time my counselors would have been able to find ways to help me.

Where are you planning on attending this fall and why did you chose this college?

I will be attending Simmons College in the winter. I chose this college because of its small size (there are approximately 1,300 undergraduate female students), small



student to faculty ration (10:1) and because of the way I felt the moment I stepped on campus. Simmons is located in Boston, Massachusetts and so it is mainly a flat campus and easy for me to navigate.

One last piece of advice from Elena:

Even though the college search may be stressful if you start early, ask the right questions and talk to people in your same situation you will be able to find a college that is a perfect match for you.

# DID YOU KNOW ?

Cerebral Palsy	A disorder of the central nervous system which affects muscle movement.
Disabled Student Services	Office that coordinates academic accommodations for enrolled students with documented disabilities. Accommodations are determined on a case by case basis (classroom relocation, sign language interpreters, recorded course material, note taking, and priority registration).
Assistive Devices	Any item, piece of equipment or product system whether acquired commercially, modified or customized that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.
Personal Assistant	Sometimes called attendant care, is help with a variety of activities, such as getting out of bed, bathing or meal preparation (activities of daily living). Not having this basic help often prevents people from living independently, working or being an active part of the community.
Paratransit Services	Provides curb-to-curb services available through your local transit authority.



# George

by Miray Ghaly



He doesn't at like "normal people"  
Nor mature as quickly  
At 11 years old he still wears diapers.  
And walks around slowly banging on his chest.  
He makes all kinds of weird noises,  
And can't hear or see too well.  
When anyone talks to him,  
They have to yell for him to hear.  
Some things he can understand.  
Things such as "yes", or "no", and "stop!"  
The one thing he adores is music.  
Light music is his favorite.

He is capable of so much love,  
Shares anything given to him.  
And tries to play with the other kids.  
He hugs people, and tries to talk.  
There is a look of innocence on his face.  
I wonder if he wishes he weren't disabled.  
I wonder if he knows.

# Hollywood Awareness

*A look at how Hollywood has treated disabilities over the years*

by Justin Leader and Robert Berg

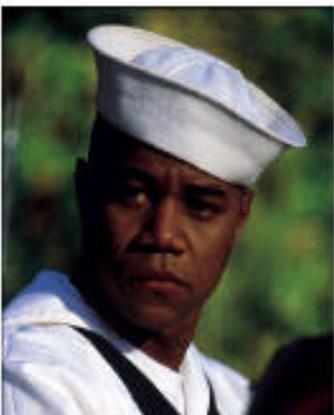


## Seabiscuit

This summer's most critically acclaimed hit touts compassion and empathy. "You don't throw out a whole life because it's been beaten up a little," the movie jokes of it's disabled horse and jockey.

## The Other Sister

Juliette Lewis' superb portrayal of a young woman who is mentally retarded whose overprotective mother fears for her safety, when she wants to move in with and marry Danny McMann.



## Men Of Honor

Cuba Gooding, Jr. portrays Carl Brashear, in this inspiring, true tale of the first U.S. Navy



diver, who did not allow racism on the part of his drill sergeants and fellow soldiers, nor an amputated leg, impede his dream.

## As Good As It Gets

Jack Nicholson portrays Melvin Udell, an insular, unpleasant man with obsessive compulsive disorder in this Academy Award-winning film. His disorder is gently poked fun at, but not cruelly so, as we watch Melvin evolve from an uncaring antisocial stooge to a warm and loving man.



## Rain Man

Another Academy Award winner, this film promotes the myth that all people with autism are also savants. Despite this, the story of love and frustration between two brothers is played with touching sympathy.

# Homebound Instruction

by Michelle Schamberg

Mom, I don't feel well. Can I stay home from school today? Typical. How many of you have taken the day off from school whether it be a result of sickness or laziness or that big test you feel you just can't handle? This scenario seems to be characteristic of any high schooler, but what if you were different - what if you couldn't go to school because your health prevented you from doing so?



The situation is then reversed. When a student becomes ill, fractures a bone, is hospitalized, or suffers from some other ailment, it could potentially affect their ability to attend school. So now what? A teenager can't miss months of school if they are expected to graduate on time with their peers. In cases such as these, when a student is physically unable to attend school, homebound instruction is required.

Homebound instruction is simply an alternative method of educational services; instead of going to school, the school comes to you. Tutors are provided by the local public school district and come into the student's home to teach core subjects, i.e. Math, English, Science, and History. According to the New York State Department of Education, a student in secondary education, who is eligible for homebound instruction, is entitled to receive a minimum of two hours per subject of instruction per week (totaling ten hours per week).

However ideal this arrangement may sound, homebound instruction is no picnic - and I should know. I have been on and off homebound instruction for the past five years due to an ongoing medical illness and am fully aware of the burdening realities of my education. Learning at home is not as easy as one might think. If anything I have to work twice as hard, if not more, to keep up with everyone in school. Another

issue is that there is no reinforcement of what has been taught because I only see the tutor once a week. If a test has to be administered, it is given during the scheduled two hour session which replaces any instruction in that subject for that week - unfortunately one tutoring session missed at home is equivalent to a student who is absent for an entire week. Also, keep in mind that the home setting lacks almost all of what the classroom has to offer: a blackboard, students and friends, class discussion, handouts and notes, and in the case of a science class, laboratory stations and other instruments. Most of what is taught, in my experience, is done orally with very little written material. This can be an extremely difficult way to learn, especially with the daunting shadow of the New York State Regents looming in June.



Fortunately, technology is quickly opening up opportunities for homebound students. Video conferencing for instance can allow students to experience the classroom via video feed. There are even arrangements that can be made whereby the student at home can actually communicate with the teacher and classmates. In addition, Internet classrooms also offer homebound students the chance to reap the benefits of the classroom environment without having to be physically present.

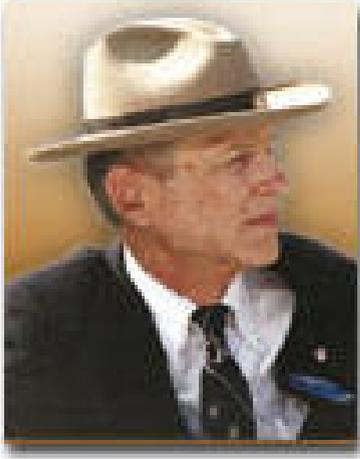


All the same, readers who envision homebound students sitting at home in their pajamas watching television and eating junk food should realize that if one is sick enough to be home, then one is too sick to enjoy being home. Teenagers too easily forget how wonderful it is to be able to wake up each morning and go to school where they can see their friends. And more often than not, one misses the little things, such as waiting for the bell to ring at the beginning and end of each class or having a school locker. However, venues for more class interactive homebound instruction are increasing despite false beliefs that continue to linger.

# Soldier of Justice

## Remembering civil rights activist Justin Dart

by Rory Harte



Most recognize the names of Martin Luther King, Jr. as the father of the civil rights movement and Susan B. Anthony as the mother of the women's suffrage movement. Someone who may not be as well known, but who has also been influential is Justin Dart, Jr., the father of the Americans with Disabilities Act and a pioneer in the field of disabilities activism. One June 22, 2002, at the age of 71, Justin Dart died. That day the world lost an advocate for equal rights. Justin Dart described himself, as a soldier of justice.

Dart was born on August 29, 1930. At the age of eighteen, he contracted polio, an illness which left him unable to walk and a wheelchair user. After his recovery, Dart attended college and graduated from the University of Houston. He wanted to be a teacher, but was prevented from doing so because he was in a wheelchair.

Dart traveled to Japan to run his family's Tupperware factory there. Although he started with three employees, by 1965, the workforce had expanded to 25,000. In Japan, he took people with disabilities out of institutions to give them full paying jobs. He also organized Japan's first wheelchair basketball team.

During the Vietnam War, he visited a rehabilitation center for children with polio to investigate the conditions in that war torn country. He found children with disabilities left in awful conditions. After these experiences, Dart and his wife Yoshiko left the world of business to devote their lives to the cause of disability rights.

In 1974, the Darts moved to Texas, where Dart immersed himself in local disability activism. He became a member and chairman of the Texas Governor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities from 1980 to 1985. President Ronald Reagan appointed him vice chairman of the National Council on Disabilities in 1981. He was at every state

meeting with activists. Together they started to work on a policy that would fight discrimination against people with disabilities.

In 1986, Dart was appointed head of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). This federal agency supervises a range of programs for people with disabilities. He hoped to make radical changes to increase the rights of people with disabilities through this position. He wanted people with disabilities to be included in every aspect of designing, implementing and monitoring rehabilitation programs. Dart became increasingly disappointed with this agency and spoke out at a public hearing before Congress about the inefficiency and lack of vision of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Dart resigned from this post but he had sown the seeds for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Dart was appointed to the chair of the Congressional Task Force on the Rights and Empowerment of Americans with Disabilities in 1988. The Darts toured the country promoting equal rights and were instrumental in the development in the Americans with Disabilities Act, which was signed into law July 26, 1990.

In 1989, Dart became chairman of the President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities. This committee advocated for the rights of people with disabilities and urged businesses to hire workers with disabilities. At this time, Dart made a courageous appeal for the rights of people with disabilities by protesting a commuter airline's refusal to assist him in boarding a plane. Dart slid out of his wheelchair and crawled up the ramp and into the plane while dressed in his business suit. It was Dart's way of protesting the airline's lack of accommodations. His actions evolved from his own experiences in an inaccessible world.

Dart was among the first to notice the backlash against disability rights. Many people wanted to repeal or amend the Americans with Disabilities Act. In 1994, Dart and two other activists, Becky Olge and Frederick Fay, founded a group called Justice For All to answer the critics of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Justin Dart was a leader of the disabilities rights movement for three decades and a renowned human rights activist. For the last years of his life, he struggled with post-polio syndrome and congestive heart failure. In 1997, Dart suffered a series of heart attacks which further compromised his health. In 1998, Dart received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our nation's highest civilian award in recognition of his activism. Dart accepted this Medal on behalf of everyone who had worked to support the rights of all human beings. He had copies made of this Medal and sent them to activists with whom he had worked all across the country.

Justin Dart died in June of 2002. After at least 50 years of fighting for civil rights, he spent his last days writing his manifesto. Justin Dart wrote the following words before he died:

*" I call for solidarity among all who love justice, all who love life, to create a revolution that will empower every single human being to govern his or her life, to govern the society and to be fully productive of life quality for self and for all." - Justin Dart Jr., Soldier of Justice*



# My Sister

by Nick Cortes



When I was little I realized that my older sister Sarah had autism. As a result of her inability to speak, it is very difficult for me to communicate with her. She can only say a few words and sometimes repeats one word over and over again. Sarah Screams a lot because she becomes frustrated that her own family cannot understand what she is trying to say. Even with all of these struggles, Sarah is a great older sister and a great companion. Just like all my friends, she loves to have fun and helps me out whenever I need a hand. Whether it is getting me a glass I can't reach or sitting and playing with me in Cape Cod, I always know Sarah will be there for me. Knowing what a wonderful person she is and how much Sarah has to offer, I want to send a simple message to all people. I want everyone to know that individuals with disabilities have thoughts and feelings just like the rest of us.

My whole family tries their best to let Sarah know that we will always be there for her. We try to do everything we can to help her and give her the opportunity to live the most fulfilling life possible. One thing we do for Sarah is bring her to a program every Saturday for children who have special needs. Sarah gets a chance to go swimming, bowling and eat lunch with her friends. Even though it takes an hour to get her to the program, we never miss it because Sarah loves it so much. Sarah brings us so much joy and happiness; my family always makes it our goal to do everything we can to make Sarah happy.

Although Sarah feels happy and accepted when she is at her program or when she is spending time with her family, not all people make her feel welcome. Often times when we are out in public people stare at her. If they would only open their minds, our world would be a better and more accepting place.



# NYS Regents Examination

Subject: Accessibility

Name: Matthew Cushing

Date: September 23, 2003

DIRECTION: Read entire article before going to next page. When you have completed all pages, close the test.

Beginning with the class of 2003, New York State students are being required to pass five Regents exams to graduate from high school. What effect has this new requirement had on students with disabilities? While it is a positive step to raise academic expectations for all students including students with disabilities, some students, parents and teachers have expressed concern that the Board of Regents may be setting the bar too high. With new Learning Standards to live up to and the need to be in Regents classes where they can receive appropriate instruction to prepare them for exams, the leap may be too great for some students with disabilities to make. Especially when some of them may already be experiencing difficulties in getting their school districts to provide them the supports and modifications outlined in their Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). Many of them are not receiving their special education programs and services in the regular education classrooms, much less in the Regents level classrooms they will have to be in if they are to be prepared for the Regents exams.

In response to some of these concerns and to give them NYS Education Department an opportunity to monitor the changes, a "safety net" has been put in place for students with disabilities. Almost all students must take the Regents examinations but if students with disabilities fail the exams, while passing they course, they can take another, less rigorous examination called a Regents Competency Test.

Students with Disabilities  
Participating in English  
Regents Examinations

One the positive side, students with disabilities are being given an opportunity to participate with their peers in tests. The NYS Education Department reported that more students

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	with disabilities passed the Regents exam in English in 2001 than took it in 1997. This effort to be inclusive of students with disabilities is a good thing. However, students with disabilities will have a long way to go if they are to receive
4,419	5,647	12,607	13,518	15,348	

Regents diplomas at the rate of their non-disabled peers. The Education Department's 2001 *Pocketbook* summarizing data on students with disabilities states that "very few students with disabilities earned Regents diplomas...in 2000-01...5.1% earned" them.

One the positive side, students with disabilities are being given an opportunity to participate with their peers in tests. The NYS Education Department reported that more students with disabilities passed the Regents exam in English in 2001 than took it in 1997. This effort to be inclusive of students with disabilities is a good thing. However, students with disabilities will have a long way to go if they are to receive Regents diplomas at the rate of their non-disabled peers. The Education Department's 2001 *Pocketbook* summarizing data on students with disabilities states that "very few students with disabilities earned Regents diplomas...in 2000-01...5.1% earned" them.

Including students with disabilities in Regents testing may have other positive outcomes. If students do poorly it may serve to hold schools accountable for the quality or type of instruction they are providing to students with disabilities. If students with disabilities do poorly on the tests, then schools will need to look closely at their own methods of instructing these students and assess how well they are implementing student IEP's. Focusing on instruction of students with disabilities and expecting regular education teachers to pay close attention to student IEP's will improve the educational process for students receiving special education services.

A recent change in special education regulations directs school personnel to make certain that each regular education teacher be provided a copy of a student's IEP. With this detailed plan in their hands for how to teach each of their students with disabilities, regular education teachers will be more focused on the need to modify their instructional techniques to meet the unique needs of each of their students with disabilities.

No one wants to place undue importance on a single test or to make students with disabilities anxious about taking Regents exams which have a reputation for being difficult. But if we look beyond the discomfort an individual may feel in taking a test, we may see the real value of this experience. Without the tests it is almost impossible to collect data to measure

progress toward meeting the higher learning standards which everyone agrees are important for both students with and students without disabilities. If test scores are low, schools can be held accountable. Schools can be required to make necessary changes in instructional techniques, and the use of materials, supports and modifications. The end result will be better more inclusive classroom experiences for students with disabilities.



[Home](#)

[Current Issue](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[About Us](#)

[Contact Info](#)



# Power of Music

by Bridget Ford

The power of music is undeniable, from causing waves of people to dance to communicating an important social message. Music also has significant therapeutic power and has proven to be particularly beneficial in the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, commonly known as ADHD. ADHD belongs to a family of disorders which interfere with an individual's ability to both regulate behavior and activity and maintain focus and attention. Individuals who have been diagnosed with ADHD are commonly treated with medications such as Ritalin, Dexedrine, Dextrostat, and Adderall. While these medications can be helpful, they are by no means the only answer to the problems caused by ADHD. Music, to the surprise of many, has a significant part to play in the repertoire of effective treatments.



Music is beneficial in the treatment of ADHD because of the effect it has on certain areas of the brain. Research has shown that in a person with ADHD the cortical areas of the brain which focus attention, control impulses and integrate stimuli have yet to become fully active. Specifically the brains of children with ADHD show a significant lack of activity in the anterior cingulate cortex (an area that is associated with focusing attention on a specific stimulus) and the prefrontal cortex (area where impulses are controlled and a person plans actions). Studies also show that children with ADHD frequently have an area in their upper auditory cortex, which has also been found to be under-active. This area of the brain is thought to coordinate stimuli from many different sources. These critical areas of the brain are the very ones that are stimulated by musical sounds. When these otherwise under-active areas are stimulated, the functions they are designed to facilitate, namely focusing and controlling impulses, improve.



There is no suggestion that music can cure ADHD. However, it can promote healthier brain function and, in doing so, enable an individual who struggles with this disorder to become more focused and controlled. In addition, a daily dose of the right kinds of music can positively affect the human spirit without negatively impacting the

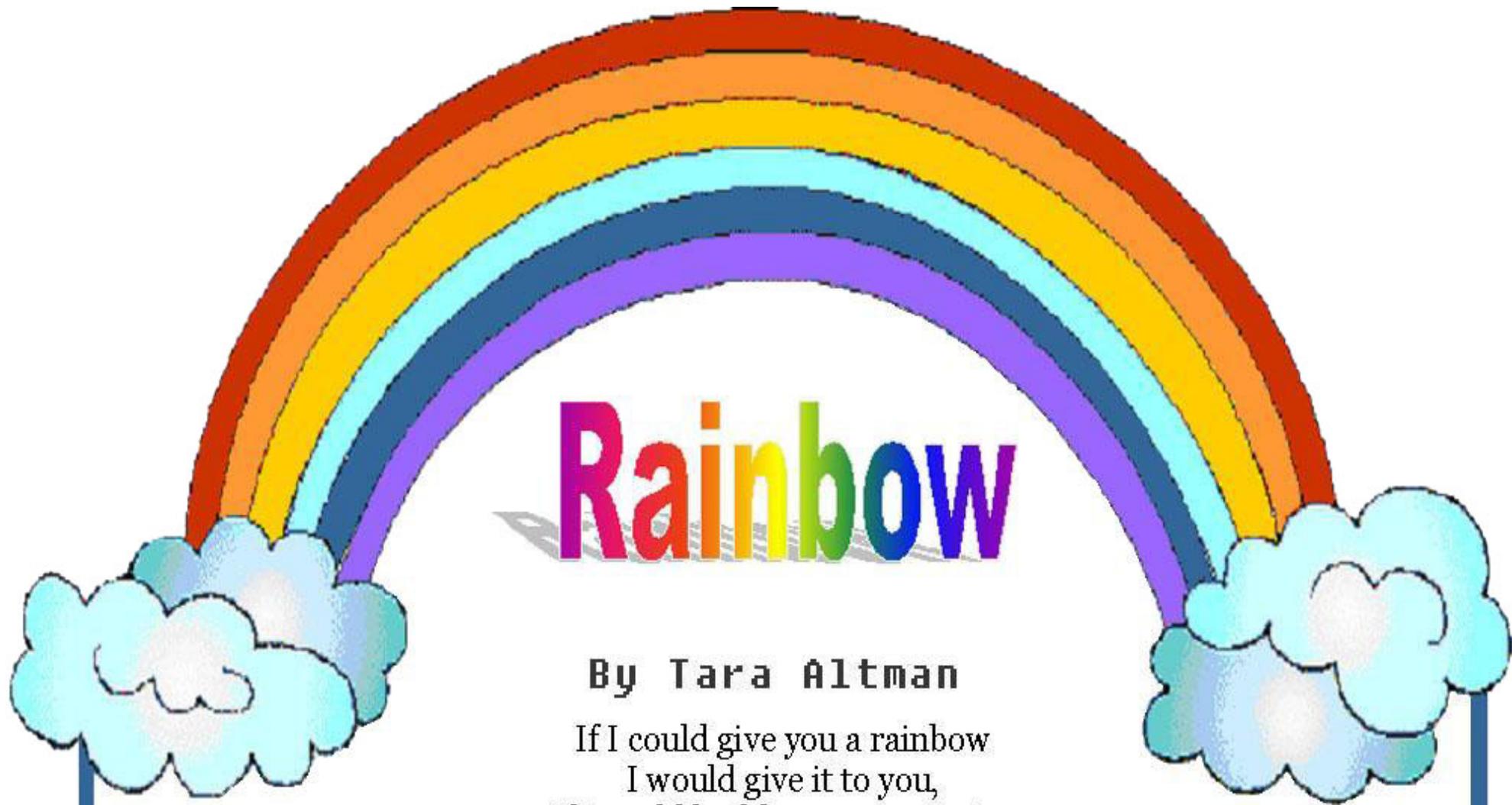
# Pursuing Achievers

by LaJoan Donely

A difficulty,  
It's only a means to strive harder for  
The things you feel you can't achieve.  
Seek for your strength.  
Yeah, it's there, it's deep within.  
The saying is a fact,  
You are only what you think you are.

Do you glean on limitations?  
Why?  
Limitations come from those who feel they can't reach  
their goals of 100%.  
Being average is tolerable.  
But to soar beyond being average forgets limits.  
For there's no limitation for success.No mater what, no-fault situation  
May have set you back.  
You're a winner, achiever, endurer.  
Against whatever others told you.  
You are only what you think you are.

Those are my words to you.  
Having a disability, illness, or disorder is  
not a reason to sit back.  
Your talents are just as good as the next persons.  
I say that because everyday people  
Have setbacks in their lives.  
The problem is not what is setting you back  
It is how you handle the set back.



# Rainbow

**By Tara Altman**

If I could give you a rainbow  
I would give it to you,  
If I could build you a mountain,  
you can call it your very own place  
To be alone.

If I could take your troubles  
I would toss them in a sea just for you,  
But all these things I am trying to do  
are hard for me,  
To figure out.

I cannot build you a mountain  
or catch you a rainbow,  
If I could I would  
You know I would give you those things  
in a heartbeat.  
But since I can't,  
let me be what I know best,  
A friend who is always there for you  
And who will always care  
no matter what happens.

[Home](#)

[Current Issue](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[About Us](#)

[Contact Info](#)



# Small Deeds

By Co-Editors Frances Ford and Jessica Schubmehl

In seventh grade, when we first joined the Disabilities Awareness Newsletter, our view of the world and the people in it was very small and sheltered. Coming from a small town and an even smaller school, the world around us seemed very simple. Discrimination was an abstract concept. We had no idea how many people in this world are discriminated against because of their disability.

We walked into our first meeting, six years ago, somewhat intimidated but comforted by the knowledge that this experience was going to change our view of people, especially our view of individuals with disabilities. Through researching various disabilities, attending conferences, and listening to the stories of people who have disabilities, our view of the world began to grow and grow. We learned that a disability does not control a person, but that people can control their own lives. Anyone can improve his or her own quality of life and everyone deserves to be treated as a human being. The world holds endless possibilities for anyone with a goal and the bravery to seek it. Working on the Newsletter made us realize that all of us deserve an equal shot at achieving our goals. We often heard of individuals with disabilities who were discriminated against because of their physical or mental handicap. With these stories our view of the world changed and expanded. After hearing stories from individuals such as Temple Grandin, Dr. Bobby Newman, and Dr. Tony Atwood, we learned that the world is not just a place where all people are treated equally and given the chance to achieve their goals. Learning this hard truth inspired both of us to always make sure we opened ourselves up to all people. It was our hope that through teaching others about individuals with disabilities that we would help them to broaden their own view of the world around them. Through the people we met and stories we heard, we realized that there are extraordinary people throughout the world and all people have a story to tell and a lesson to teach. The only way we all can hear the stories and learn these lessons is by opening our minds and pushing aside our prejudices.

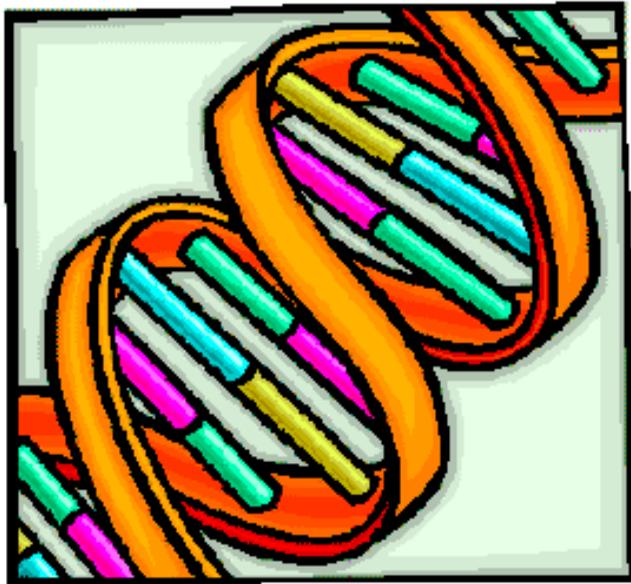
Six years after we began, we walked into our first meeting as co-editors of the Disabilities Awareness Newsletter with a much broader view of the world we lived in.

We were no longer the naive seventh graders with the belief that all people are treated as equal. Yet, we also realized that even though there are injustices in the world, there are things we can do to stop these injustices. As editors we were able to pass down some of what we learned about the world to the younger students who have just joined our group. Hopefully, all that we have learned, especially this year, can be used by others to break out of their own shells. It is our hope that what they learn will allow them to be more aware of the world with its problems, but also gain the desire to change them. This year was one of the most amazing and rewarding experiences of our lives because as the leaders of the Newsletter we were able to spread our new view of the world to a new generation of board members.

In the real world hurt and pain are an everyday occurrence however, the small things that we have learned and the small impacts we have made will always make a difference to someone. Thanks to the Disabilities Awareness Newsletter we were given the chance to make a difference in the world and in the lives of others. This has been an opportunity that everyone should have and we feel it is an honor that has been bestowed upon us. Thanks to everyone who has taught us that every contribution, even the smallest one, can make the world a better place for someone.

# What's the Deal with Stem Cells?

by Leah Jakaitis



It's like something out of a science fiction story: a magical cell which could prevent Alzheimer's, help lead those with neurological problems to full recovery, and even re-connect severed spinal cords. However, as the potential for stem cell usage unfolds, these problems could fade into the past.

Stem cells are derived from a human embryo's still developing tissue in the body and umbilical cord. They are "blank" cells, meaning that the embryo's cells are still in early development; the cells within its body are not yet biologically specialized to perform an individual task. Scientists extract the cells from

aborted fetuses and isolate the cells outside of the body. Since the cells are not yet specialized, they may function as any number of things: brain cells, blood cells, etc. Therefore, they may be used to repair tissue which has been damaged within one's body.

However, a major dilemma remains: It is ethically "right" to be utilizing unborn embryos to harvest cells?

Further studies of stem cells would undoubtedly prove beneficial to those who need it most. To date, research has concluded that stem cells can, for instance, be used to strengthen heart muscles weakened in heart attacks. Other research alludes to using stem cells in order to mend severed spinal cords, a feat formally thought impossible. And despite the potentially positive outcome of these cells, the ethics of their usage looms so large that research much be approached cautiously.

Two main arguments have emerged. From one side comes the sentiment that though unborn, the embryos are biologically alive. Therefore, stripping them for parts is not questionable, but wrong: it is killing a person. From the other side comes the sentiment that embryos are not alive, because they are reliant on the mother and cannot survive independently. This debate is, at the core, the decades-old argument between pro-life and pro-choice factions.

As a result of these opposing opinions, the government has trouble remaining neutral. In an attempt at neutrality, President Bush approved a law which states that the federal government will provide funding for stem cell research. However, the government limits said funding to laboratories which clone their stem cells, rather than harvest them from aborted fetuses. Though this is a good stepping-stone, there is no real genetic cross-section available when cloning is used. Genetic variety would decrease dramatically, thus limited the potential for the stem cells.

Europe, on the other hand, has taken a less restricting approach. Already, it has its first private stem cell research lab, named ReNeuron Holdings. The company is based in London, England and founded by the Institute of Psychiatry. Though the company has not utilized stem cells in treating humans yet, they will be using fetal stem cells in order to treat stroke victims, Alzheimer's patients and others with disabilities by 2004.

Is the United States so far behind?

Most likely not. Even with such a small genetic pool of embryos to work with, scientific advances are still bound to happen. With further advances may come further federal funding, as well as a greater acceptance throughout the medical field and general population of stem cells. Taking advantage of our current technology and its application shows us an incredibly promising future for the eradication of physical disabilities.



# Struggles with Dyslexia

by Ashley Lape

as told to Samantha Pack, Jamie Futterman and Liam Futterman

Despite the efforts of activists and the influential Americans with Disabilities Act, There are still pervasive social stigmas attached to the validity of so-called "invisible" disabilities, those not immediately recognizable. One disability that falls into this category is developmental reading disorder, or more commonly referred to as dyslexia. In the past, individuals with dyslexia were considered "slow" or mentally deficient. Only more recently has dyslexia been investigated and diagnosed, brought into the public light by notable achievers like Whoopi Goldberg, Tom Cruise, Albert Einstein, Henry Ford, Walt Disney and Winston Churchill.



Ten years ago, I was not only reading below level but I had a hard time with spelling. Right away it was detected at school that I may have dyslexia. Thankfully, every measure was taken in order to manage the disorder. The word dyslexia itself originates in Latin "dys" meaning difficulty and "lexia" meaning words. It is not an eye problem. Dyslexia is a disability that can manifest itself in many different ways, causing problems with reading comprehension, with learning to translate written words into spoken words, handwriting, and even spelling. There are several kinds of dyslexia such as surface dyslexia, phonological dyslexia, direct dyslexia, and deep dyslexia. It is important to remember that developmental reading disorder is no way related to a person's intelligence. There is no "cure" for dyslexia. Even to this day, I struggle with dyslexia but I have learned to amend my life accordingly. I realize some things never change, while I was growing up I never read out loud and still do not, but now I have grown to love reading to myself. It has been a struggle over the years but now, a senior at Peekskill High School, I have seen my growth and progress everyday.



Besides my own story, there are others that serve as inspiration to individuals with developmental reading disorder and illuminate the many opportunities that people with dyslexia have. Tom Cruise for instance finds it difficult to memorize his lines on a written page, so he dictates them onto an audiotape and repeatedly listens to them. Fortunately, there are numerous other success tales like his. And with luck, technology and human understanding will continue to improve the lives of people with dyslexia.

# The Sunniest Rainy Day

by Aimee Almeleh



"You will be responsible for the most vulnerable members of society," the words from the previous day's orientation echoed through my head. Having no idea what was in store for me, the orientation had just exacerbated my worst fears. As I stood at the curb that rainy day and waited, every second seemed to be an eternity. Thoughts of child molesters, lost children, and other tragic "what ifs" continued to run through my mind. Watching the raindrops hit the pool and disappear forever helped me to assuage my anxiety. Then it came, the yellow school bus pulled up at the curb. "You will be responsible for the most vulnerable members of society," began playing faster and faster in my mind. Fear consumed me like darkness at night. In that instant, I felt as if I wanted to walk away. This whole situation was more than I thought I could handle. I started to take a step back but then I reminded myself how many people I would be letting down, among them 20 incredible children with Down Syndrome - my campers.

I spent my summer volunteering for Nassau County's Camp ANCHOR - a camp dedicated to Answering the Needs of Citizens with Handicaps through Organized Recreation. My brother had attended the camp and seeing the smile on my brother's face upon his return home inspired me to strive to give those same feelings of happiness to other children with disabilities.

I had started by volunteering for ANCHOR's swimming program on Thursday nights with my brother, Ari. It gave us a chance to spend quality time together. Soon I became hooked, and what began as a sporadic night of volunteering turned into a considerably more dedicated venture. Volunteering those Thursday nights had served as a type of psychotherapy; it forced me to put aside all my petty concerns and worries and give my full attention to kids with disabilities. It's no surprise that when I was approached about spending the summer at Camp ANCHOR as a volunteer I eagerly replied yes.

But then, there I was, standing at the curb waiting for my campers to pull up and I was suddenly questioning myself. What if I didn't have what it takes? As I looked

around, I saw the large circus tents all ready and waiting for campers, the excitement in the eyes of seasoned volunteers as they prepared for the arrival of their new companions, the smiles of kids peering through bus windows realizing that they were at a place full of acceptance and love, the faces of the staff who finally saw their work of the previous ten months paying off, and the sense of relieved parents as they looked around knowing their children would be in trustworthy hands. There was so much to take in - it was overwhelming. Suddenly, the bus door opened and anxiously I waited for them to get off the bus.



As the campers and I headed off in the rain to our tent, I introduced myself. I did not tell them I was their counselor or their aid or their supervisor or their guardian or their protector - I told them I was their friend. They looked up at me with big smiles on their faces and told me they were ready to have an incredible summer. I was too, knowing that the rain would soon subside and the sun would shine through.



# Teamwork



by Sarah Nettleton

Working as a group is what teamwork means.

Trying together for everyone wins.

Building a community where everyone grows.

Understanding each others needs.

Challenging our weaknesses.

Celebrating our strengths.

Using our abilities, everyone succeeds.

Reaching and teaching we help each other grow.

A strong group of friends.

Testing our wings.

Together as a team.

Succeeding when others thing we will fail.

Our strong team will go on.

This poem is dedicated to Andrea Allen (11/11/81 - 11/27/02). Andrea was a great teammate.  
Ms. McCarthy's class misses her very much.

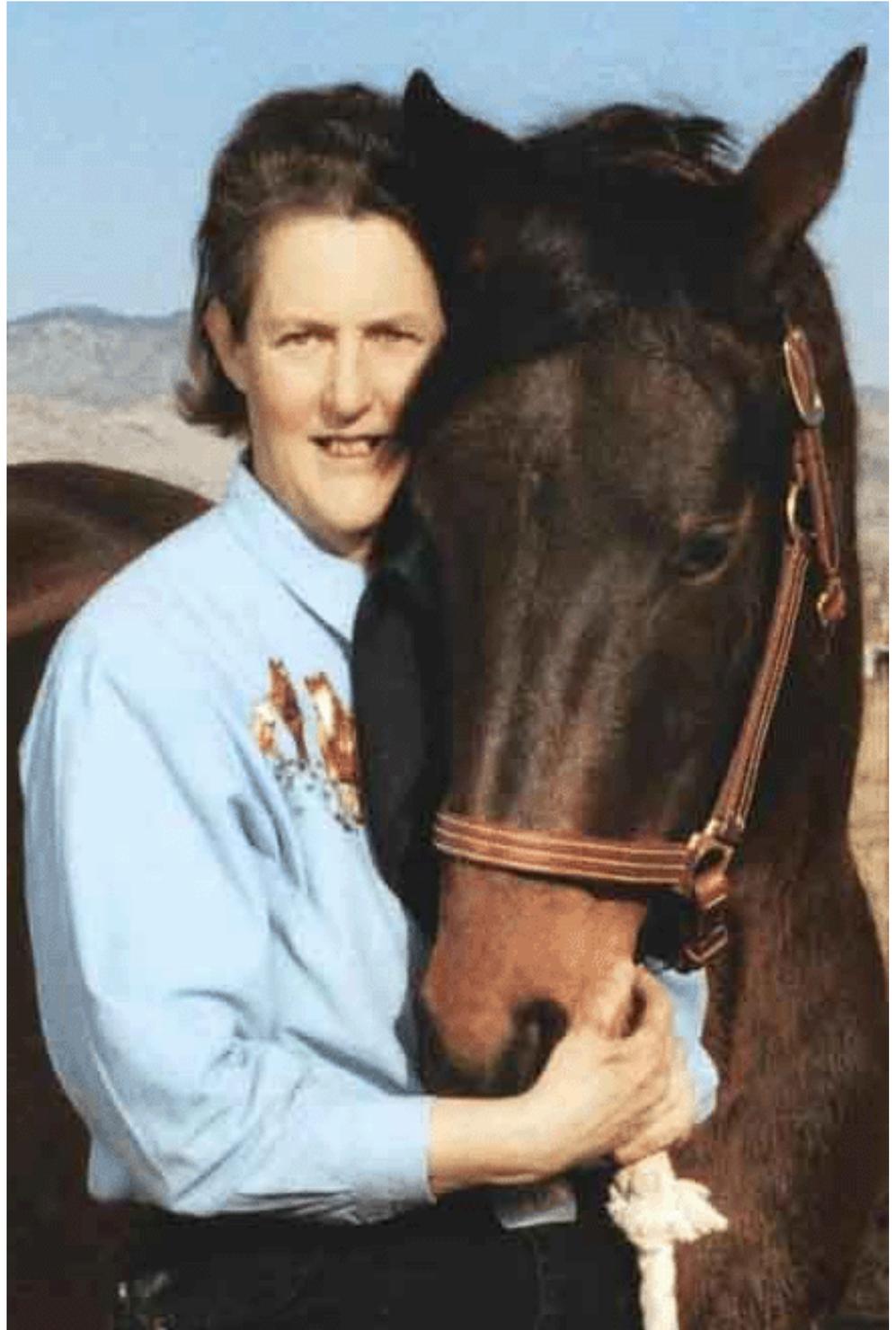
# Temple Grandin

This **caring** cowgirl has embraced **autism** in her life

by Aidan Harte

Dr. Temple Grandin has traveled all over the world, designing livestock facilities in the United States, Canada, Europe, Mexico, Australia, and New Zealand, but she had a different purpose for being in Suffern, New York on November 7, 2002. This celebrity of the livestock trade (she's been interviewed on CNN Larry King Live and 20/20, and featured in Time Magazine, Forbes, and U.S. News and World Report) was the main speaker at a conference on autism and Asperger's syndrome organized by Future Horizons and the Parent Support Network. Afterwards, we sat down over scrambled eggs and bacon to discuss autism, her career, and her life.

As head of Grandin Livestock Systems and Associate Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, many may claim that Grandin has overcome the difficulties autism poses. However, Grandin's achievements are not in spite of



autism; autism, in fact, has played a complex and integral role in her life. She has slowly learned ways to live with autism and minimize its effect on daily activities.

"People are always trying to discover a single influence...there's no one single thing [that can treat autism]. It's a whole lot of gradual progression...[I was influenced by] my science teacher, my aunt, and of course," she quips, "the right medication."

Though in many dictionaries autism is defined as "a state of mind characterized by daydreaming, hallucinations, and disregard of external reality", the disorder is far more complex and often misunderstood. This is perhaps because there are varying degrees in the complexity of an autistic diagnosis. However, there are several characteristics present in almost every case.

Individuals with autism often have difficulty forming and maintaining friendships, and are described as being "cold" and "indifferent". They also have a great deal of difficulty in discerning the meaning of verbal and non-verbal communication. These individuals can fail to realize what a gesticulation or facial gesture might mean, and do not usually recognize changes in tone.

In many cases, individuals who are diagnosed with autism have difficulty developing an imagination or thinking abstractly. In general, most who have this disorder have difficulty making sense of our society and have trouble adapting to it.

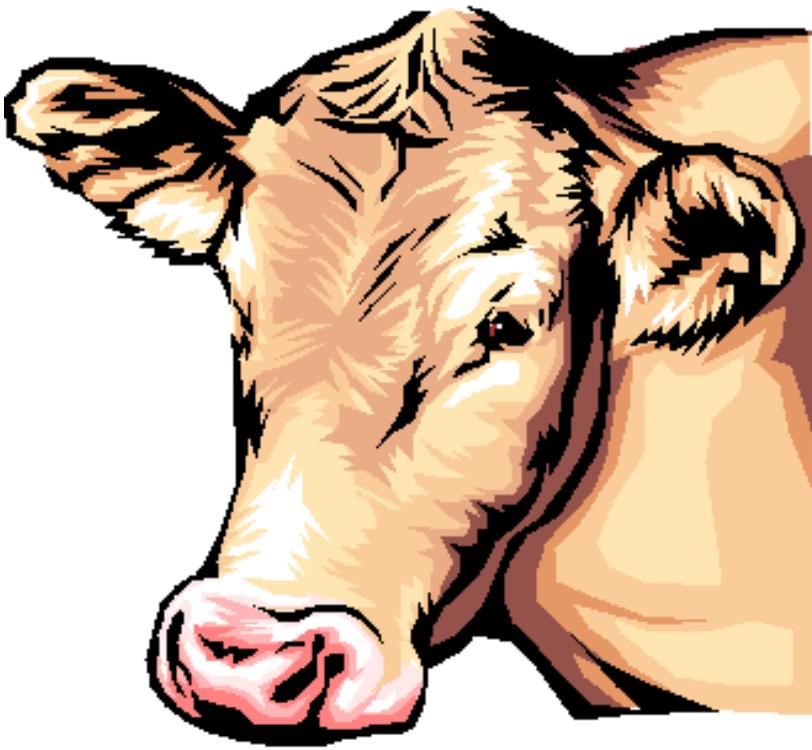
Grandin was born in 1947, in Boston, Massachusetts and, by the age of three, displayed classic symptoms of autism. Though her doctors recommended that she be placed in an institution, her parents instead placed her in a private school, where her many skills were improved and her mind nurtured.

Grandin enthusiastically values the importance that a private education and skilled teachers had on her.

"I can't emphasize enough the importance of good education and teachers...mentors can really motivate kids."

Grandin's education continued when she graduated from Franklin Pierce College in 1970, then attained a master's degree from Arizona State as well as a doctorate from the University of Illinois-Urbana in animal science.

Inspired by her aunt in Arizona, it was there that she became intensely involved in the livestock business. Using her degree and extensive knowledge, she hoped to improve the trade significantly.



"I didn't like what I saw and I wanted to change it," she explains. Grandin, aware of her own hypersensitivity to sound and touch, hoped to develop a new conveyer system, which would significantly decrease the panic response in animals sent to the slaughter. As many individuals who have disabilities do, Grandin learned to use and appreciate her disability. As Grandin explains, "I'm a visual learner...I was able to project a 3-D image in my mind." This system has been extremely successful and has been adopted by many companies.

Though Grandin is still very involved with her company, she is also actively involved in touring the country and speaking about her disability. During her speech she recounted memories from her childhood and warned parents about letting children with autism provide their own stimulation.

Grandin is particularly opposed to video games for kids with autism, which allow them to "zone out" and fail to incorporate important lessons. "Video games are drugs for the eyes," she adds.

Grandin also places an emphasis on the importance of enjoying one's job. "Broaden the [child's] fixation into something worthwhile...having a real job is important. I get satisfaction in my life from what I do."

As an author, animal scientist, and speaker, Grandin has achieved a level of prestige many would not have foreseen given her childhood condition.

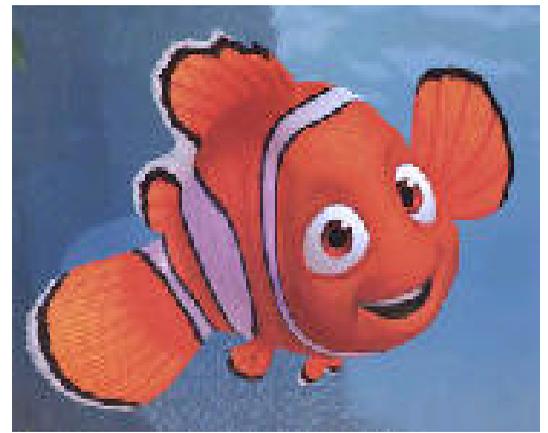
# THE RIGHT TO FAIL

by Justin Leader

There comes a time in adolescence when a child has to test his limits in order to grow. Children are confronted with opportunities they can either seize or let pass them by. The difficulty is convincing a protective parent to let them take such risks. Children, unlike parents, often don't care if they might fail. But any parent is naturally cautious about such things.

For children with disabilities, the situation is often much more difficult. A childhood of adversity and struggles has - understandably - conditioned parents to be overprotective. But children with any kind of disability still eventually become teenagers who have the inevitable drive to test their limits.

Disney-Pixar's recent summer blockbuster, *Finding Nemo*, strikes a chord with many families of people with disabilities. In this computer animated film, Nemo, is a young clownfish who has an underdeveloped side-fin (his "lucky fin," Nemo calls it). Add to this a Bambi-like opening to the movie; an attack by a predator fish that leaves Marlin, voice by Albert Brooks, as a neurotically overprotective father.



Nemo, on the other hand, lives in a world of acceptance. He and his school friends have healthy attitudes toward disabilities, some of them having their own tongue-in-cheek problems like "H2O intolerance" (a considerable problem for a fish).

This movie is a healthy alternative to some troubling representations of disability movies directed towards children. Will Smith's *Wild Wild West* featured a villain in a mechanized wheelchair that transformed into an evil robot. Just as often as villains are the 'main in the black hat,' they are also signified by a physical or verbal disability, such as Captain Hook's peg-leg. This is not meant as an indictment of the entire entertainment industry, but rather to point out an innocent but troubling tendency of writers to use physical disabilities as a short-cut to strong characterization of antagonists.



Everyone in *Finding Nemo* is dealing with their own problems. Bruce (*left*), a shark, is a member of the Fish-Eaters Anonymous, a self-help group for fish addicted sharks.

Dori (*larger fish to the right*), voiced by Ellen Degeneres is a Blue Tang fish that has short-term memory loss. Like the protagonist of the recent critical hit movie *Memento*, she can only have short conversations with people before she starts to forget what is going on. But Dori's disability is handled with sensitivity and real emotion. We see why Dori developed the disability and how it truly



effects her life. All sides are presented; not only the comic but the tragic, the uplifting and depressing. Ellen Degeneres voices Dori with an always optimistic view of life.



Tolerance of others is an important theme of this movie. These characters all come from many different backgrounds, but always find a common ground from which to develop relationships. Crush (*left*), the hippie turtle, bonds with Marlin as father-to-father.



# TOPSoccer!



## A soccer program that is all-inclusive

by Stephen Schubmehl

TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a unique program, which helps thousands of children with disabilities nationwide to enjoy the game of soccer. TOPSoccer is organized by youth soccer association volunteers in local communities and is designed for any boy or girl between the ages of 8 and 19 who has a mental or physical disability. This wonderful program brings the opportunity to all children to learn and play the sport of soccer.

The unique thing about TOPSoccer is that each program is different because it is created around the needs of the individual participants. Additionally, TOPSoccer athletes are placed on teams according to ability, not age. The length of the program runs from 6 to 8 weeks and the playing rules are adjusted to fit specific needs of the players but they use the US Youth Soccer rules as guidelines. There are a variety of choices for the organizers of a TOPSoccer program, ranging from small-sided games (3 vs. 3; 4 vs. 4; 8 vs. 8, etc.) to full-sided games. There are also opportunities for indoor programs, soccer camps and skill development sessions. The guiding principals are to keep it simple and to make it fun! This is a very popular program, because there are over 2,500 kids participating nationwide and over 700 in New York State alone.

The success of the TOPSoccer is dependent on both volunteer and community involvement. One community sponsor for TOPSoccer is Uniroyal Tire Company. In the Capital Region area Uniroyal has teamed up with the Blackwatch Soccer Club to start a TOPSoccer program. The program emphasizes fun, participation and personal success. At practices the teams warm up, have skill lessons, and small-sided games.

TOPSoccer offers a soccer program that enables everyone to enjoy this wonderful sport. Without TOPSoccer, its skilled coaches, and volunteers many of these children would not be able to participate in the sport at all. Thanks to TOPSoccer, soccer is now a game that everyone can enjoy and learn from. The game of soccer helps children with all abilities, with their hand eye coordination, teamwork skills, and is a lesson in life. Thanks to TOPSoccer, for making soccer into a sport that has no boundaries and no limits for any child who is driven to play.



# We All Have Feelings

by Tiana Skawinski

Children with disabilities should not be made fun of, called names, or any other form of harassment. Even though doing these things is very cruel and hurtful to the people they are said to, I come across it everyday. I see it and hear it happen in school and in my neighborhood. The reason I am so familiar with this topic is because my brother is affected by disabilities.

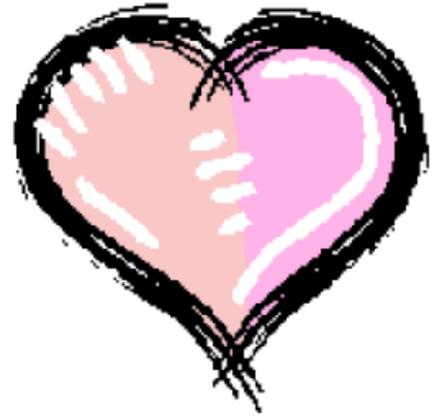
My brother, Tyler was born with a form of autism, called Pervasive Developmental Disorder also referred to as PDD, as well as other disabilities. Tyler has a severe speech delay although our family members are able to understand him, others often have difficulty. Tyler has processing issues that make learning difficult. He has trouble with his numbers and alphabet. Most of the time he can recite the alphabet but if you ask him to do it again two minutes later, he will have forgotten some of it. Tyler can count up to thirty with help but he cannot match quantity to the number past five, and he is nine years old. Tyler also has trouble forming the letters and numbers on paper, sometimes he comes home from school with his name spelled wrong even though the day before he spelled it the correct way.

Unlike other kids, children with disabilities are not usually able to get involved in as many extra curricular activities such as dance, karate or sports teams. At James E. Allen Elementary, a school for the disabled where my brother attends, he has some of these activities during the day such as Boy Scouts, basketball, hockey and cheerleading. My brother was on the hockey team and he loves it. They play against another area school for children with special needs. To be on the team there aren't try-outs or cuts, the teachers just pick the kids in their classes.

There are many different types of class structures - Tyler is in a 6:1:1 class. His class has five other students, one teacher and one paraprofessional. He has an occupational therapist, physical therapist, and a speech teacher.

Besides PDD my brother also has some behavioral problems. He does not know when to stop. Tyler often hits, punches, kicks, pinches, and screams. Getting along

with my brother can be extremely difficult. One minute he is pleasant and the next he is acting out. Though you or I may feel bad for him there is no way that it can be changed. Sometimes when i sit down with my mom we talk about how Tyler will do in life when he gets older. We worry about continuing education, jobs and where he will live.



To deal with Tyler I am part of a group at his school to learn how to react to our siblings. I have learned that there are many children that are affected by a disability. Mostly boys are affected such as my brother. Tyler has come a long way and continues to try. He has a really good sense of humor and makes us laugh all the time. Sometimes I can even forget that he has special needs.

If you know someone that is affected by this or any other disability, do not make fun of him or her. Help the person when they are having trouble and defend them from harsh put-downs. Remember disability or not they still have feelings.

