

seeing only the wheelchair and not the girl seated in it. I will admit to having days filled with self-pity at not being able to walk, dance, or run but they soon pass when I realize all the things I am capable of and have already accomplished. I actually like going to school because it's something I can manage independently, and I feel comfortable surrounded by my teachers and friends.

I am a bit more cautious, though, in the world outside my high school. I am trying very hard to leave the security of familiar surroundings and make an attempt to be seen at more school and community functions. It took me a long time to learn that if people do not see you at school events, the mall, or the movies (like a normal teenager), then they assume that you do not wish to be included. Many teenagers have never even been close to a wheelchair, or think that because my body is weak then my mind must be also. It is up to me to invite questions from people, to answer their curiosities, to help them feel comfortable—not only around me, but around my equipment, too. I need to let them know that I just wish to be treated like everyone else.

One of my personal challenges this past year was saying yes to a movie and dinner with my friends. It meant not being ashamed to be seen in my wheelchair, which may not sound like a big thing to an adult, but it was a scary first step for me. To help me accomplish this, God blessed me with two guardian angels, my friends Stephanie and Britney. Stephanie, my best friend for six years now, proudly pushes me through the mail, across parking lots, or up to jewelry counters. We have an understanding that when she pushes, I hold all our packages, frozen cokes, and purses. Stephanie has always treated me with dignity, great compassion, and honesty, and I thank her for that. Britney is a girl I met at Muscular Dystrophy Camp last summer, and she is fighting her own form of the disease. She is also a sophomore living in Alliance. Having someone to talk to who truly knows how you are feeling because they are going through the same experience is a one-in-a-lifetime gift from Heaven. The two of us together at the mall is a team adventure with both of us counting on the other for balance or for a steady hand when trying on a new lipstick.

God has also given me a wonderful family, who has taught me how lucky I am. I can tell my mom anything, and I do. She always listens when I need to vent my frustrations. She makes the jerking muscles relax the fevers subside, the exhaustion feel comfortable. She makes me laugh. My dad brings breakfast upstairs to me every day before school so I don't waste any energy going downstairs into the kitchen. He has remodeled, rewired, and redesigned our entire house to accommodate me and carries my wheelchair up and down the steps hundreds of times per week. He makes me safe. My brother has done off to college this past year, and surprisingly, I miss him! He used to look out for me when we were in high school together, and he still calls to see if I need anything. He makes me normal. My dog, Oats, is always glad to see me and cares about me in a dog sort of way. Somehow she can predict when I'm going to fall and has actually sacrificed herself as a sort of cushion between me and the floor. She follows me from room to room, stares up at me adoringly and loves to eat potato chips while I tell her about my day.

So I'm learning with daily "help me get through this" prayers, to look at the world with the following in mind: If I need to create solutions to my unique challenges during my teenage years, then I also need to actually "get out there" to experience them.

Considering all the things I hope to accomplish within the next few years, I'm going to need all the "out there" experience I can muster! You see, I plan on driving within the next year, which will mean special testing, special adaptive devices, and, hopefully, a ramped van. My biggest dream is to have my own motorized wheelchair within the next year and enjoy the freedom to wheel around unassisted. The grandest of all will be attending college upon graduation from high school.

With the continued support from everyone around me and God's graceful hands holding me up, I will write to you again a few years from now with news of my adventures on a campus somewhere, running for class president.

TO HONOR THE TORREZ FAMILY
AS RECIPIENTS OF THE 2001 ARIZONA
HISPANIC CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE ENTREPRENEURS OF
THE YEAR AWARD.

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 22, 2001

Mr. PASTOR. Mr. Speaker, today I rise before you to pay tribute to not one person, but an entire family in my district which has established itself as a beacon of accomplishment. The family I speak of is the Torrez Family, owners of the great Azteca Plaza in Phoenix.

The Torrezes have been a benevolent part of our community for over 56 years. Adolfo Torrez and the late Kay Anne Torrez set a standard not only with their commitment to their business and customers, but also with the values and ethics that they instilled in their children Raoul, Royna, and Gregory.

Azteca Café was first started by Adolfo and Kay Torrez in 1946. Soon they added a small bar which they named Azteca Bar. These two businesses flourished at the corner of Third and Washington streets. Over the next few years, the Torrez family would expand their property and their businesses to include a flower shop, furniture store, bridal store, formal clothing retailer, and even a dry cleaning company.

The three Torrez children would work side by side with their parents learning from their versatility and passion for hard work. Today Gregory, Raoul, and Royna, continue in their parents footsteps, managing Azteca Plaza and are proving to their community that they are as ethical and driven as their parents, and as compassionate and caring for their community.

The Torrez family recently received the 2001 Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneurs of the Year Award for their work not only as business people, but for their contributions to society.

Mr. Speaker and all my colleagues, please join me today in paying respect to this incredible family, my friends, the Torrezes of Phoenix.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF
PUPIL RIGHTS

HON. MAURICE D. HINCHEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 22, 2001

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, a group of students from Kingston, New York have spent a good part of the past couple of years working with a students from St. Petersburg, Russia to draft a document that catalogs a set of universal rights of students. The program from which they are working is administered by the Center for Civic Education, which promotes worldwide community participation.

The students in my district have been communicating with the students in St. Petersburg mostly by Internet, but have had personal exchanges as well, both in Russia and in New York. In comparing their educational stories, the students found that they shared similar experiences and held common opinions about problems that young people were faced with at either ends of the world. They decided it was time to document certain rights that they believed to be applicable to students around the world. The end result is the Universal Declaration of Pupil Rights.

The students will soon be meeting with representatives of the United Nations to present their document. In recognition of the efforts that were put into creating this important document and because I firmly believe that all young people should be afforded certain rights that guarantee an appropriate education, I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to submit the Universal Declaration of Pupil Rights in the Record so that it may receive an appropriate level of attention.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF PUPIL RIGHTS
PREAMBLE

Recognizing the fact that educational institutions are necessary to prepare pupils to become positive, confident, and efficient members of society,

Taking in due account the importance for the child to receive education in a manner conducive to the child's harmonious development,

Bearing in mind that pupils are to be taught in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed by the United Nations and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality, and solidarity,

Considering the fact that the opportunity to receive better education will help countries better uphold their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, thus promoting universal respect for human rights and freedoms,

Recognizing past indifference to and disrespect for pupil rights have resulted in inhumane treatment and aggression towards pupils from persons and nations,

Due to the fact that the school is considered to be a special territory where the child's rights are not applicable, resulting in the regular violation of the rights already established in other United Nations documents,

Understanding that the enumeration in the Declaration shall not be construed to deny or disparage other rights retained by the people,

The UN General Assembly proclaims this Declaration of the pupil's rights as a standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations in order to secure the pupil's rights and freedoms at school and in its territory.