

BRETT MUSICK SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST



BRETT MUSICK

is a senior at Beachwood High School. He is an active member of the yearbook staff, drama club and American Sign Language club. He is involved in his temple's youth group and enjoys participating in theatre. He also volunteers in the Jewish Community Center child care department. Brett will major in education and deaf studies at the University of Cincinnati, with the hopes of becoming a teacher for the deaf and/or hard-of-hearing.

Discrimination is easily discerned by those who are victimized by it. People who are singled out for inferior treatment have no problem identifying the phenomenon. They are the victims. This all seems rather obvious when one considers discrimination by color, religion or other obvious inherent physical qualities we all possess. But what of those people who look like the majority? What of those who, in every way, seem to belong in the mainstream of our society, except in one way? I am speaking of the deaf.

One may ask, "Are these people discriminated against?" Of course they are. It's fair to say American society has tried hard to allow deaf people to integrate into our everyday life through legislation. For instance, television programming must make closed caption available. But try to imagine for one moment not being able to hear. Try to imagine always being one step behind. Discrimination is easily discerned by these people. They live it each and every day in the pathetic patronizing way they are treated. I have a close friend who is deaf and he will tell you in a moment, he is discriminated against every day of his life by most everyone he comes into contact with. His biggest hurdle is basic communication. That is where sign language becomes essential.

I am currently a senior in high school. When I was in fourth, fifth and sixth grade, I participated in the sign choir. It was a group of students who wanted to learn signing as a way of communicating with deaf people. It was a wonderful experience. When I entered high school, I wanted to continue my education of the mute language and took American Sign Language as my foreign language. I did not feel this was enough. I went to the administration and attempted to start a sign club for students who wanted to continue their quest of becoming sign literate. The school told me that if I could get enough students interested in this venture, and a faculty member to advise the group, they would institute it as a formal school sponsored club.

Today I am the founder and president of my school's American Sign Language club. We boast over sixty members who meet on a regular basis with our advisor. We have a unique goal.... To better ourselves with the ability to communicate with those who were formally shut out from the mainstream. We know that every journey begins with the first step, and this is indeed only a first step. It is my intention to make this club my legacy in the school system. I want future students to see this as a positive way to make their world better. Signing has been established as a formal language in many school curriculums. That is great, but again, I want more. I want my school to be the model in the training and cultivation of teaching signing to students in Ohio and hopefully in the United States.

