

## COURTNEY SCHMIDT SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST



### COURTNEY SCHMIDT

is a junior at Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School. She loves animals and in her spare time plays basketball and volunteers at a camp for kids with special needs. She is considering college at either University of Toledo or Bowling Green University in the fall of 2014 and is hoping to get a degree in criminal justice.

One day during gym class our teacher told us to pair up. As we were picking our partners I couldn't help but notice a boy trying to ask some kids if they wanted to be his partner. They just stared at him laughed and told him no. I looked over at him standing by himself trying not to cry. I felt bad that I had two partners and he had none. I didn't help him or stand up for him because I was too afraid of what others would think or even do to me. As the year went on this kept happening to him over and over again, but all I did was just watch and feel awful for him. The kids in our class got worse, they would pretend to be his friend and then the next day decide to ignore him and make fun of him. He would just stand there with tears in his eyes.

In the winter we were just starting basketball, and again our teacher told us to pick partners. I looked over at the boy and saw the same thing happen again. He went to ask some other kids if they would be his partner and they just pretended he did not exist. That was it; I couldn't keep watching this happen. I went over to him and told him I would be his partner, he said thank you with a grateful look in his eyes. After that I was his partner for the rest of the year. I found out he had certain disabilities he couldn't help. He told me about how kids tease him for it all day at school.

Once I found this out I decided that I was going to help. He would come to me with any school work he needed help with and would talk to me about any problems he might be having. He told me about some of his other friends that are in his special needs classes and how they go through the same thing. When the next year started instead of going to my study halls I helped out in the special needs classrooms when I could, and I became a volunteer at a camp that helped kids who have special needs. No one should stand by and watch kids get picked on like that, I know I never will again.

I am planning to go the principal of my school and see if I can make ads to air on our school's TV every morning to try and get kids to volunteer at the camp I'm helping at now and to raise awareness. I hope that this will help the kids of our high school to better understand our special needs kids. I would also like to talk to our school principal about sponsoring an assembly about bullying and how wrong it is, to bring an awareness of the effects bullying can have on others.