

## Izzy Baker-St. Susanna-Bishop Fenwick High school

Since birth, my life has been very different from most kids because I have a condition called *Situs Ambiguus*. All the organs in my chest area are backwards, except my heart. Sadly, the tubes going into the chambers of the heart are still switched, which is the reason for my four open-heart surgeries. My condition has held me back physically, and it used to hold me back mentally too, before I started believing more in myself. I realized that I could do things I never thought I was capable of doing, and I learned it through my passion of inspiring people to be their true selves and to not let others pull them down.

The last surgery I had was in second grade. I was only eight, and the thought of being unconscious horrified me, but I stayed strong and pulled through the rough road of recovery. That summer I joined a swim team, and what I could do after coming out of a huge surgery less than a year earlier amazed the coaches. I still remain on the team and every coach since has had the same reaction to my ability to push myself yet still know where the line is drawn. Even gym class was sort of a challenge for me until I pressed myself to try extra hard to keep up with all of the other kids.

I believe that since I have done so much for the good of my school in the last eight years there will now and forever be an indelible mark on St. Susanna left by myself. I am currently St. Susanna's Student Council President, but last year I was the Treasurer. It is my job to be a voice for the students of our school, and I take this responsibility seriously. Seeing littler kids' faces when I do things for them or when I enter their classroom makes me so joyful. I honestly love what I do for my school and for the people who are included in it. Last year, the five other officers and I took one of the playground benches and made it the "Buddy Bench." It is a place where little kids can sit at recess when they do not have anyone to play with. When others see them there, they extend an invitation to play. We painted it bright red with Snoopy and Woodstock. All the kids love its inviting and colorful feel, and I am proud to say that I was a part of it.

So many people helped me during my surgeries, and to make it up to the kind world, I do tons of service for my community. Every Christmas my family adopts a family from a poorer part of town. We buy gifts, wrap them, and then I go and add ribbon and bows to make the presents as pretty as possible. I also volunteer at my church and school for many other activities and events. A few acts I do are serving funerals, putting together the yearbook, mentoring younger students, girl scouts, and cheerleaders, and helping teachers or other adults get or do what is needed.

I may not have the most glamorous or the easiest life, but my challenging, heart-filled world is perfect for being me. Guiding others and shaping my community brings me an immense amount of joy. My life may not be the most interesting, but so many children look at me like I am a celebrity. To me, that alone is worth more than any amount of money. I hope that I have inspired the people I know, and I hope I inspire you.