

WAY TO GO! Veronica Zieba

Her fearless approach to hearing loss earns award

A Copiague teenager's fearless stance toward her hearing loss has won her a national award.

Veronica Zieba, a senior at Walter G. O'Connell Co-



piague High School, was one of 10 students nationwide to win the National Society of High School Scholars' "Be Fear-

less" award competition, which challenged students to submit a 500-word essay on what it means to them to be fearless.

She received a \$500 scholarship for winning.

Zieba, 18, said she wrote about her sensorineural hearing loss, which occurs when there is damage to the

inner ear or the nerve pathways from the inner ear to the brain. She was not diagnosed until she was 4, as local hospitals weren't required to conduct hearing screenings on newborns until 1999, she said.

"Due to the delay of my diagnosis, my early childhood development was behind that of most average students until I reached middle school," Zieba said. Of her essay, she said: "I wrote about how I had a low self-esteem and no confidence in myself because of my hearing loss. In the end, I learned to appreciate my hearing loss and prove to people that I can do anything I set my mind to."

Zieba is a member of her school's National Honor Society, marching band and costume and props crew.

— MICHAEL R. EBERT

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