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If I could live a part of my life in someone else's shoes, I would—not because I am unhappy with who I am as a person, but because I would like to find out if their shade of blue is the same as the one in my own mind. I expect it wouldn't be.

My experience in art has closely mirrored that of my life. It began when I first picked up a pencil and began to pass potato-head people off as realistic portraits; I was two then. Coming from a small country town where the cows undoubtedly outnumber the people, it is generally difficult to expand as an individual. Yet despite this fact, my fuzzy interpretation of what surrounded me developed into something clearer, and my potato people soon sprouted necks and torsos. Over the years I have grown as an artist, my work showcased in a number of shows, including the Sussex County and State Teen Arts Festival, State Touring Exhibit, Sussex County Arts and Heritage Council, and the NJ State Fair. Last year, I was a semifinalist for the NJ Governors School of the Arts, and most recently, I attended the AANJ 13th Annual Art Exhibit at Kean College where I earned a Merit Award and eligibility for the AANJ Governor's Award in art.

My work reflects my life, revealing obstacles I may have encountered or fears I carry concerning society, religion, and politics. With art, I have found a voice with the ability to transcend the confines of a quiet town. Last June I found myself in Los Alamos, New Mexico, mapping stars in the Jemez Mountains. I earned my place as one of eight on that expedition with the Student Challenge Awards Program through my art's impression. It is amazing the new horizons a simple brush and canvas can reveal.

Within my home community, I strive to be an example for my peers as a Blaustein Scholar, secretary of the National Honor Society, and a 4-year varsity athlete. I have contributed twelve pieces to the literary magazine, *Calliope*, including the cover design and chapter details of the 2002 issue. Outside of school, I have been asked to design a number of things, including courtyards, tattoos, portraits, and murals in homes. Besides art, I partake in peer counseling, youth ministry, PRIDE, Science League, concert and marching band, stage crew, weight training and soccer. My involvement in these activities reflects my fascination with new perspectives, new ways of looking at things. Life is anything but commonplace, and I find that my art is more than a vase of flowers or a bowl of fruit; it's about coloring outside the lines. Art is not just expression but communication; I expect a response of some kind. My major goal in art is to try to bridge the gap in society's communication, coax open closed minds, and show my shades of blue. Hopefully others will share theirs, too.