



NJDOE News

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State Board of Education Recognizes Outstanding Student Attends Newark's John F. Kennedy School

The State Board of Education today recognized a student from the John F. Kennedy School in Newark, Essex County, for her academic and athletic accomplishments. The student, Robin Smith, has overcome personal obstacles that include multiple disabilities.

"Robin Smith is an inspiration for everyone who faces special challenges in life," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "Robin has shown all of us that with courage, determination and hard work you can reach your goals and overcome any obstacles."

"Robin has distinguished herself as a world-class competitor in Special Olympics competition," said Maud Dahme, president of the State Board of Education. "She is a credit to her community, her school and her family. We wish her a bright future filled with more accomplishments."

Soon after enrolling in the John F. Kennedy School in 1993, Robin became involved in the Newark Special Olympics, demonstrating her athletic abilities in basketball, track and field, roller-blading, speed skating and bowling. She has participated in these sports at the local and county levels, finishing in the top three at the county level each year.

Since 1993, she has participated in the New Jersey Olympics winter and summer games, winning many gold, silver and bronze medals in the 100- and 300-meter run. Robin's outstanding effort propelled her to the 2001 International Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska. There, she won the silver medal in the 100-meter run, and the bronze medal in the 200-meter run. She placed fourth in the 300-meter run.

In recognition of her achievements, Robin was selected New Jersey Special Olympic Inspirational Female Athlete and her photo appeared on a special edition of the Golden Grahams cereal box. She has made personal appearances in different communities representing the goals and interests of multiple disabled students.

"Robin is recognized and respected as a leader by her peers and teachers," said Patricia Pallante, principal of John F. Kennedy School. "She has left a lasting positive impression on all who have had the opportunity to interact with her."

The State Board hosted Robin today as part of its new recognition program to honor each month a student or group of students for their accomplishments in community service, the arts, academics, sports, or other areas.