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Oyster Bay senior beats adversity, wins scholarship

Michael R. Ebert
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Mark Georgacopoulos, a senior at Oyster Bay High School, is one of 108 students nationwide to recently receive a \$20,000 scholarship from the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, an organization honoring those who have overcome adversity. Georgacopoulos was selected from more than 36,000 entrants.

"When I got the call, I thought someone was pranking me," said Georgacopoulos, 17, who is president of his senior class. "It took a few minutes before it started to sink in."

To become eligible, Georgacopoulos submitted two letters of recommendation and three one-page essays last year. One piece detailed his family's financial difficulties in 2005, while also describing his battle with spinal myelitis since the age of 3.

To address his partial paralysis, Georgacopoulos has undergone five surgeries, the last of which was completed last summer. He now enjoys full movement and is a member of his school's tennis team.

"I still have a slight limp, but I feel great," he said, adding that classmates have been understanding of his illness. "My advice to others is to live your life every day and don't let things you can't control get you down."

Georgacopoulos is vice president of his school's Business Honor Society and a member of Students Against Destructive Decisions and Interact, a community service club.

TO NOMINATE a student as a Way to Go! candidate, send information and photography (photos cannot be returned) to Michael Ebert, Newsday, 235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY 11747 or e-mail michael.ebert@newsday.com. Photos sent via e-mail should be high-resolution images.
