

2011 LEG UP AWARD WINNER

SUSAN JOHNSON – HANOVER COUNTY

This year's leg up award is a great young lady who has walked through a life time of trials with her head high. Her outstanding outlook on life has touched many people's hearts leaving lasting fingerprints.

At the age of 4, this 4-Her contracted encephalitis which caused the loss of 2 years worth of memory, and required her to relearn many basic skills such as speaking. In spite of efforts to catch up, this young lady remained developmentally behind her peers. With the introduction of horses into her life, this 4-Her was able to grow physically and mentally at her own pace while developing coordination, concentration, and confidence.

At age 12 she suffered another setback when she had a stroke on her left side induced by a hemiplegic migraine. Through all of these trials, this outstanding 4-H member remained positive. After outgrowing her first pony, she spent four years growing with her new equine partner "Cash." While lovingly nurturing Cash through a suspensory ligament injury and a bout of colic, this optimistic 4-Her cheered on her peers who were showing. After a short time back in the saddle, Cash had a second struggle with colic, and in March of this year this incredibly challenged 4-Her had to make the difficult decision to have her beloved horse euthanized.

Through her own struggles and her horse's struggles, this amazing 4-Her's positive attitude has been an inspiration to numerous 4-H members and leaders. Through her trials, she never waned in her 4-H participation; rather, she stepped into new leadership positions in her club. This outstanding 4-Her is in her last year of 4-H eligibility, and is proving the strength of her spirit by participating in the 2011 Virginia State 4-H Horse Show with a horse that her supportive friends and family provided for her. Please join me in congratulating this year's worthy Leg Up Award recipient...from Mattaponi 4-H Club in Hanover county...Susan Johnson.