This past June was an especially exciting beginning of summer for me because I was able to celebrate my Sweet Sixteen with a party. To commemorate this milestone birthday, I decided that I wanted to invite several of my family and friends over to my house to celebrate. However, this was no normal house party, because both of my parents have very large extended families and I have many friends who play an important role in my life.

When first planning this spectacular event, I decided that I wanted to do something different to make it memorable. I quickly decided that, as a gift to me, I wanted everyone to donate money to NOAH. This was an easy decision for me because I realized that I would make others overjoyed, which would in turn make me happier than any material object could.

I constantly want to do fundraisers for NOAH, but I also wanted to find a way to raise money without putting too much of a burden on my family and friends. Raising money from my Sweet Sixteen celebration seemed like the perfect idea. Instead of spending money on a gift for me, everyone could join me by making a donation to NOAH, a community that I am a part of and love to support.

When my guests found out what I wanted to do, they quickly became excited and desired to make my dreams come true. I was overwhelmed by the generosity shown by my friends and family as everyone made large donations to this valuable organization. Many people also gave me separate gifts because they felt I should still receive a little something for my selfless action. Some people even went out of their way to write me letters thanking me for my generosity.

Although others viewed my decision as selfless and generous, I just thought that this was the right thing to do. Being a member of this wonderful NOAH community for many years, I have discovered the joy that this organization can bring to so many of us.

I am privileged to have an extremely strong support system, which includes my loving parents and outstanding vision teacher Paulette DeMarinis. With assistance from many people, I am always informed about the latest assistive technology. I have been able to receive many wonderful modifications that have enabled me to make my academic dreams become a reality. I am blessed to have many amazing friends who accept me just the way I am. Although I am very lucky, I realize that many people do not have the same opportunities I have. NOAH is here to help many of those people take hold of those opportunities. Through NOAH I have met many friends that I can empathize with, as well as make new memories. NOAH has
given me so much. I want others to be able to experience all that NOAH has to offer.

NOAH has helped many people, and although everyone wishes that help could be free, the harsh reality is that nothing is free. To show my appreciation for all that NOAH has done for so many of us, I decided to give back. I am overjoyed to announce that I was able to raise $3,300 for NOAH! I am so thankful to everyone who helped me support this extraordinary organization.

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**Ready for My Close-up**

By Sophie Ostrove

Hi, I’m Sophie. I’m 14 years old and I like acting and filmmaking. Doing these things may seem daunting for someone with albinism, but sometimes my albinism makes it easier and better. Since last summer, I’ve had the wonderful experience of working on sets for various TV shows and movies as an extra. I worked on Fox’s “Gotham” and a few movies that are coming out next spring, so make sure to check out “Wonderstruck” and “Going in Style” to find the girl in the background with the light hair and glasses (shameless plug).

It’s sometimes hard to be sitting around for hours waiting for the directors to get the right shot, when all you have to do in the scene is walk from point A to point B. However, in the end, it’s all worth it. Thanks to my albinism, I totally stand out because of my hair. It makes it really easy to find myself in big group scenes.

I’ve also participated in many theater productions over the past few years. Most people get nervous when going onstage because they get stage fright. I can’t even see anyone in the audience, so this definitely helps me be less nervous. Between the large amount of people and the (sometimes too) bright stage lights, I couldn’t see the audience even if I wanted to. Of course, my albinism can make it harder to do some things. Sometimes, when working on films, I’ll be at point A but can’t see where point B is. As a result, I just have to guess. It usually works out, even if sometimes the stage lights are too bright. However, it’s better than staring at the audience’s reactions throughout the show.

Finally, I have to say that the good things that come out of these experiences far outweigh the bad. In the end, even if it doesn’t seem like it, there are more #albinoblessings than #albinoproblems. So if there’s something you’ve wanted to do but were too nervous to take the step because of your albinism, just go for it! Along the way you may even realize how in some ways, your albinism enhanced the experience.