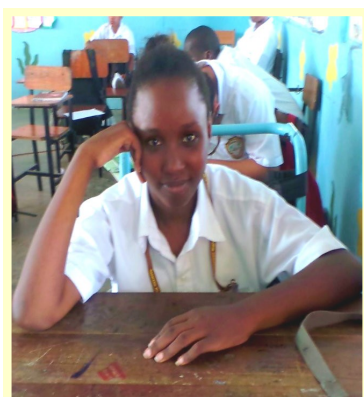




# SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

## Doris Staine Breaks Barriers



**DORIS STAINE**

Fourteen-year-old Doris Staine is like every typical high school student... *"I don't like math problems, I complain of too much homework, I giggle with friends, and I probably spend too much time on my phone."*

But for this first form student at Nazarene High School, the road to secondary education

has been anything but typical or smooth. Doris was born with the birth defect Spina Bifida, which occurs when the bones of the spine do not properly form around the spinal cord. This condition is not uncommon; affecting approximately 1 in 1000 births. As a result of the Spina Bifida, Doris is unable to walk and has limited sensation in her legs. To get around, she uses a wheelchair.

Spina Bifida does not affect her intellect, but being confined to a wheelchair means that Doris has special needs. These needs came to national attention when it was time for the then four-year-old Doris to transition from pre-school to primary school. According to her mother, Licia Staine, the family faced many institutional barriers while advocating for Doris' right to an inclusive education... there were countless visits to schools, many rejections, but also assistance from agencies and the media. Victory came with the installation of a ramp and in August 2008, Doris and her mother proudly wheeled into St. Luke Methodist's infant one class.

In the last nine years since, Mrs. Staine has adapted to a hectic schedule going to Doris' school several times a day to check on her and attend to her needs. For the mother of two, it's the least she could do to ensure that her daughter gets an education and maintains her dignity. But finding the finances to purchase the supplies Doris needs is hard and at times the family just could not meet the expenses.

Mrs. Staine says she is grateful for the financial and social support her family has received from the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation. Through the Women and Family Support Department, the family receives food, supplies, and education assistance. In addition to these subsidies, a social worker supports the family by advocating for Doris and working with the school to ensure that her needs are met. Currently, the Department is looking into building a ramp at Doris' high school so that she has easy access to her class and is also trying to get her electric wheelchair up and running to improve her mobility and self-determination.

There is no doubt that Doris has a bright future ahead of her. With the continued support of her family, peers, and the Women and Family Support Department, the teen plans to continue breaking down barriers and one day realize her dream of becoming a teacher.

To find out more about the social support programs offered by the Ministry, visit the Women and Family Support Department at Cor. Central American Blvd. & George Price Highway or call 227-7397.

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### About the Ministry

The Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation is the lead entity of the Government of Belize in the development of people, enabling them to realize their full potential and play a meaningful role in their communities.

### About Spotlight on Success

Spotlight on Success highlights the achievements of Belizeans who have experienced transformation as a result of accessing social interventions, programs, or services through the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation.