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Super Kid: Melissa Appel, 18, Everett Homeschool Alternative graduate

Self-starter: After moving out of her home her sophomore year, spent a little over a year at Cocoon House for homeless teens and has since directed her own schooling with the help of teachers at the home school center.

Life lesson: The time taught her "what it is like to fend for yourself" and made her more confident about going to college this fall. "It'll really help me in the long run."

Back in step: Reunited with her parents earlier this year and is enjoying being back near her four younger siblings.

Long road: Started struggling during her ninth-grade year at Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy High School. Didn't take well to the switch from a 16-student, eighth-grade class at a small Adventist school to the larger private school. "It's like being woken up at 8 a.m., thrown in a pool and (told to) sink or swim."

Likes home school: Finds her new setup more flexible and enjoys the return to a smaller setting. Came into the center behind on credits and was caught up and ahead by the end of her first year there. "The best part of home school is I don't have to worry about the high school drama."

Quote: "Doing the work is not hard. It's really having the drive to get up when there are days you just want to stay in bed."

Future: Plans to study journalism at Skagit Valley College, a two-year community college in Mount Vernon that gives her a four-year college feel with on-campus residences. Wants to be a freelance writer and travel. "I can bring something to the world that I want to do."

Book worm: Enjoys reading. "When I was younger my parents tell me I would read the TV Guide. My mom would yell at me because I'd get to the newspaper before she did and leave it all over the place."

Watch out: Holds a second-degree black belt. Likes serving as a volunteer tae kwon do instructor in Lynnwood. Between that and her new job up north in Burlington, she spends a lot of time on buses.

Admires: "Besides my parents for dealing with me the past 14 some-odd years," counts tae kwon do instructor Jack Pierce as a mentor. "He got me started on getting that drive ... even when I'm at the top, to see how much farther I can get."

Ready to move on: "As a teenager you think you know everything. ... I'm ready to get out there and learn."

Know a super kid? Contact us at 425-339-3036 or e-mail schoolfyi@heraldnet.com.

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