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## Overcoming Obstacles To Become A Stellar Student

By Nyddia Lugo-Spahr and Tonia N. Cimino

**J**essica Schira, 22, is very jovial and happy with God, her life and school, classmates, her church and those who have provided her with opportunity.

Schira came to the United States from her native Dominican Republic three and a half years ago, joining her two brothers who have been here for four years. Before coming to the United States, she graduated with a bachelor's degree. Currently, she studies and works at LaGuardia Community College and, in the spring of 2006, will graduate with a degree in travel and tourism.

For her to study like this literally costs her sweat and tears. Her love of history began in Nuestra Senora de los Dolores de Corona, which was the first place she went to get help and direction in her life.

Schira began her work here in a program for children between the ages of 10 and 12, despite the fact that she didn't speak much English. One of Schira's favorite experiences thus far has been being a part of the



**Jessica Schira, a native of the Dominican Republic, became proficient in English and is now a member of Thi Theta Kappa, an honors society at LaGuardia Community College.**

Queens Courier File Photo

Scouts Dominicano, where she was a member for 12 years. While there, she worked in a money transfer agency before coming to LaGuardia

Community College.

In March of 2002 she began a course of immersion in English while, at the same time, taking remedial courses. This was an

especially difficult period of time for her. She was required to repeat some classes, and often came home crying because she did not understand what her professors were saying.

Schira received help from her classmates and teachers in order to get good grades and pursue a course of study in liberal arts. Now, her GPA is above 3.5 and the stellar student holds the title of Communications Officer in Thi Theta Kappa, an honor society that has a membership of 200. She is also on the National Dean's List and is recognized as a hard-working and devoted student.

Along with her other classes, Schira enjoys taking salsa and mambo classes, and belly dances for fun.

Schira is happy with the shape that her life has taken since her arrival in the United States and says, "Studying is a big part of my life. I know I'm not like other people my age — I study a lot and don't go out much — but I'm very happy with what I've accomplished in such a short period of time."

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***— Jessica Schira***