



Casey, 16

What have you been doing this week?

Well, this week I've been working on schoolwork and going to a swim class to get ready for a swimming meet.

What are you doing in school?

Oh, a lot of stuff. Math and biology and history, and I've been learning Italian.

You're home schooled,* aren't you? Tell me about it.

I guess it's like going to public school, but the school is only a few feet away and the teacher is your mother. My sisters and brother are my only classmates. I'm the only one in my grade. I kind of have to be responsible for getting my work done. We study and take required tests.

What happens if you don't do well on a test?

I haven't ever done bad on a test. I guess if I didn't pass a test, I would get a talk from my mother.

Have you been doing anything else?

I volunteer at Horse Power, which is a riding center. It's for kids with disabilities or who are in wheelchairs, so they can learn to ride horses. Sometimes I lead the horses, and sometimes I walk beside the horse and help the kids keep their balance and learn how to ride.

What are you looking forward to this year?

I'm looking forward to going to Italy. That's why I've been studying Italian. So that when I get there, hopefully I'll know some stuff. My Girl Scout troop* is going. There are thirteen girls going; my sister is going too. We thought it would be cool* to go to a different country and see what they have there, like all the art and history over there. We have two adult leaders going with us.

How are you getting money for the trip?

We've been working toward this for two years. We raise funds by selling flowers in the spring and fall and wreaths* at Christmas. We had a spaghetti dinner* and car washes.* And we sell Girl Scout cookies* of course.

Is there anything you'd like to say to kids in other countries?

I hope you are OK over there and having a good time. I hope you are doing good.

A Few Words

Home schooled: About two percent of students in the U.S. do not attend regular schools but are taught at home by their parents instead.

Girl Scout troop: Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts are programs for young people. Scouts learn lots of practical skills and do service projects in their communities. A group of scouts is called a troop.

Cool: A slang word that means "great" or "exciting."

Wreaths: A Christmas decoration that people hang on the doors of their houses.

Spaghetti dinner: This is a way that groups earn money in the U.S. They cook a meal and people pay to eat dinner.

Car wash: This is a popular way for groups of young people to earn money in the U.S. People pay them to wash cars on a Saturday.

Girl Scout cookies: For many, many years, Girls Scouts all over the U.S. have sold boxes of cookies in the spring to get money for their programs. "Girl Scout cookies" have become part of American culture.

Discussion Questions

1. Casey is home schooled. She studies regular schoolbooks but her mother is her only teacher. What do you think might be good and bad about home schooling?
2. Does it seem unusual that Casey helps people who cannot walk learn how to ride horses? Have you seen people with disabilities do other unexpected things?