

# The Weekly Challenger

## Stepping Up The Pace



**Alliece Spencer**



**Arielle Spencer**

**JUNE 28**--On June 2, twins Arielle and Alliece Spencer of Valrico, 17, donned caps and gowns and proudly accepted their diplomas from PACE Private School in Tampa—an achievement that seemed impossible due to their previously wavering academics.

Over 5 five years ago, Gaetana Spencer, divorced mother of three, began to search for educational alternatives because her twin daughters struggled to pass their classes and failed fifth grade in their public elementary school.

“My girls tried hard, but due to a lack of individualized attention in their trouble areas of math and reading, Arielle and Alliece continued to struggle,” Gaetana said. “Arielle’s battle with math lowered her self-confidence and caused her to become introverted. I didn’t imagine getting through fifth grade let alone high school.”

After visiting PACE Private School in Tampa, Gaetana learned about Step Up For Students Scholarships, which are available to help low-income parents send their children to private school, or an out-of-district public school. Gaetana eagerly applied and upon receiving the scholarship, Arielle and Alliece began at PACE Private School.

“I can still remember my first day,” Arielle recalled. “I was initially very shy, but by the end of the day I felt like I had been there forever. Everyone was very nice and friendly.”

Gaetana noticed vast changes in her daughters’ grades, self-esteem and motivation the first year they attended PACE. As a result of the encouragement they received from their teachers, Arielle and Alliece began to believe in their own

abilities, and both girls were on the honor roll by the end of that first year.

“The teachers were able to spend time and provide step-by-step math instructions, so I was able to better understand it,” Arielle said. “I grew more confident in my abilities as a student and it showed through my honor-roll grades.”

The Spencer girls excelled at PACE Private School for five years on the Step Up For Students Scholarship and will now pursue a higher education and explore career opportunities in the real world - a part of their life that they are now better equipped for thanks to the education and guidance they received at PACE.

“I really enjoy science, so I am hoping to pursue a career in forensic science at University of South Florida,” Alliece said. This career path would be very interesting to me and science one of my strong areas.”

Arielle and Alliece look forward to continuing their education at a local university, which will be determined by scholarships that they are awarded.

“I want to continue my education in childcare at Hillsborough Community College, but that I am exploring all of my options right now,” Arielle said. “I plan to get my license for child development and become a teacher.”

Over 5,000 new scholarships are currently available for the Fall 2007 school year. Don’t delay and join nearly 17,000 students on the scholarships that can be used at over 900 private K-12 schools in Florida. For more information, please visit [www.stepupforstudents.com/parents.htm](http://www.stepupforstudents.com/parents.htm) or call (866) 739-1197.