Butterflies in Franklin Township, NJ
By Alexis Mani, second place, third grade
Susan Rainaldi, teacher

Butterflies became an interest of mine because of my Aunt Carol and Uncle John. Butterflies have been one of their hobbies for many years. My parents bought my aunt and uncle's house in Franklin Township 14 years ago. The gardens had a lot of plant life to support the habitat needed for the butterflies. My parents maintained the gardens and now my brother and I took over the gardens.

As a family we are always looking to make things better. We visited the local farmers in Franklin Township to get some tips. The Hunterdon County Parks and the Hunterdon County 4H Fair also have been good resources. We bought many different colored butterfly bushes at the Rutgers garden store over the years. Rutgers gave us a lot of information on how to care for the bushes and where to plant them. I am also a member of the Wildlife Federation Association. I became a Butterfly Hero in kindergarten. This association sends me information on the butterflies, which keeps me educated.

I have also learned about natural weeds here in Franklin Township that the butterflys love. The plants that are considered weeds are milkweed and butterfly weed, which is a cousin of the milkweed. I have traded weeds and plants with neighbors to expand my plant life to include my Franklin Township community. The neighborhood looks much better with the growing varieties of plants. I love all the butterflies and the plant life. In the summer, I love to watch the butterflies fly from plant to plant.

The butterfly is not just a hobby of my family but it also represents all those who have died in our family. When my Grandpa Jack died three years ago, we planted butterfly bushes in the garden he had at our house. These bushes have grown quickly and many butterfly varieties come to visit his plants. We have also noticed last season some new bushes in our gardens. We did not plant them and believe these bushes came from a natural source or a supernatural source!