

Know Me

NAME **Portia**

PASSION **Teaching Others**

My Story

Meet 29 year old Portia Adams. After her adoptive mother passed away, Portia lived with friends for a period of time before moving home with her sister. Due to some family difficulties, her sister was no longer able to continue caring for her and Portia moved into a home with roommates where she lived from May of 2018 until August 2020.

Always wanting to have her independence and wanting to live as normal a life as possible, Portia was able to find her voice. She moved in to a Shared Living setting with a provider that was a friend and cheerleader for Portia. Although she saw this as a new independence and freedom, Portia knew that she always wanted to have a home of her own, and she knew that she had to take a chance and experience independence for the first time; so Portia set out with the goal of finding a place of her own and located and secured a rental that she found, of all places, on the Facebook Marketplace!

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Portia gained employment with Marc's retail store with assistance from Opportunity for Ohioans with Disabilities and Goodwill Industries. She realized that she would need to work more hours to result in the income she needed to pay a monthly rent and utilities. With the assistance of her job coach, she put in her two week notice with Marc's and was called for an interview at Giant Eagle in Green, where she began employment in January 2021.

With the help of her provider, Excellence Expected, and her staff, and armed with only her own determination, Portia accomplished two goals: gaining consistent employment and signing papers for her own apartment that she was able to move into in January 2021! Portia is determined, and her determination is a fire that burns bright! For Portia, there is no developmental disability, only a differing ability in her diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy.

Aaron Stewart, Portia's Physical Therapist said, "Portia is certainly a success story for someone living with Cerebral Palsy. Portia works hard in a variety of areas in her life. I have witnessed her physical dedication for self-improvement. Portia has never let her physical disabilities define her or slow her down. I have seen her go from nearly dependent on others to now being able to live alone. When I first met Portia she needed help walking only 5 feet. Through years of hard work and persistence, she is now able to walk well over 300 feet. Attending weekly therapy sessions helped her to develop muscular strength. She is a model of putting work in, even when you are tired or sick, and the results show. Developing physical power has contributed to the person that she is. As a final word of caution don't challenge Portia to a pull up contest, you won't win!"

It is clear to Lori Pyles, Stark DD SSA, and her team, that no one is going to be able to tell her a goal is out of reach!

From Lori Pyles, Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities Service and Support Administrator. I would have to say that Portia's passion is independence. She is highly determined and I love that she refuses to take "No" for an answer! She refuses to listen to others who tell her that her dream is out of reach until she has tried to attain her dream, and then; she doesn't give up on the dream...she replaces it with another that is within reach. She is an inspiration to me with her determination. Portia has truly found herself.

When I first met her, she was in a situation in which she was told that she wouldn't be able to live on her own and that she wouldn't have a community job and she got so discouraged by hearing it that she began listening to it. Portia decided she needed a new start so she went to the drawing board and prepared the materials needed to paint her masterpiece. She decided on a new provider and she chose one she felt would support her dreams, and not try to limit her desires. She joined with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities to find employment and was hired on with Marc's. When they were not moving quickly enough for Portia to get her on the schedule and not getting her the amends needed to do her job, she put in her two week notice, and started looking again! Portia was hired

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at Giant Eagle where she is a bagger, and has already set her new goal only 5 months in by wanting to train as a cashier soon!

When she found herself between a rock and a hard place with her living arrangements, she took the reins and started looking for her own home, and found one within her means of financial liking. Portia has utilized me, as her SSA to accomplish her dreams. I learned early on that Portia would not accept being told something was impossible. She would listen to perspective and she would take that into consideration but she refused to give up until she knew the goal was out of reach. Portia has grown to better stand up for herself and speak out for what she needs, instead of making sure that those around her are happy first. Portia is an inspiration to me, and she makes me want to be a better SSA for not only herself, but all of my clients. Portia's masterpiece is not complete, but she is far from a starving artist at this point in her life. If I had to describe Portia in the words of another, I would have to say Coco Chanel said it best when she said; "If you were born without wings, do nothing to prevent them from growing.", and growing is just what Portia continues to do.

Portia's sister, Heather McCullough, said "Portia such an inspiration! How to even describe her in a short story seems almost impossible for the girl with the sunshine smile! Most importantly she was made in the image of God! She's been created with a purpose and God given plan only she can fulfill. She's a beautiful extraordinary woman who blossoms more and more each day.

Throughout tragedies, traumatic events and losses she's used her voice to break free from SILENCE, and become a VICTOR no longer victim.

Independent living for Portia has advanced her happiness and strengthened her courage no matter how big or small you can achieve anything if you just don't give up. She chooses to take action in her care and promotes ways we can help her do what she chooses each day. It's her life and she's going to live it how she finds true freedom and happiness. Nobody can make you happy, you find that in yourself and God. She makes others happy seeing her determination and ability to do anything she sets her mind to. She's been tackling change like a boss, and in the process others are changing their own perception of what independence looks like isn't the same as someone else's.

"Thank you Stark County Board of DD for the resources and advocacy in her process and respecting her individual rights. Thank you to all her team for supporting her each day! Thank you family and friends whom are actively involved in her life! Thank you Heavenly Father for making her days to shine brightly for you and be of encouragement and growth in others lives. She's changing lives as they fit her individual needs each day-Go Portia!!!"



Know Stark DD



**Stark County Board of
Developmental Disabilities**

Supporting People with Disabilities & Their Families