



JADEN'S SUCCESS STORY

Jaden is a Lake County teenager who was born with a disability called Cerebral Palsy (CP) caused by not getting enough oxygen to his brain at birth. Jaden was diagnosed by six months of age and, because of early intervention, he and his family have been able to face the set of lifelong challenges that CP presents head on. He began physical therapy at seven months of age, and even though doctors had told his parents that he would never walk or have a normal life, he was up and walking before his fourth birthday. School was difficult for Jaden in the early years. Writing was extremely hard for him, because his hands would not cooperate, and caused him to fall behind in the work. His school provided him with a computer to do most of his work on and that helped him overcome this challenge. As he got older, he was provided with new technology to help him continue to succeed academically and overcome his disability. Jaden was sometimes teased in elementary school because of his differences, but he made several friends who accepted him for who he was and who stood up for him whenever it was needed. More recently, Jaden underwent two major surgeries to fix the straightness of his legs. He had to learn how to walk again two separate times in the course of two years and went through two weeks of intensive rehabilitative therapy. Each surgery brought him closer to feeling like a normal kid. Although his hands and arms are shaky, he still finds his way around daily challenges like carrying plated food and open cups, cutting food, and other small tasks others take for granted.

In Jaden's Own Words:

What would you tell other children and young adults in Lake County about what is most important to your success? How would you encourage them? Something important to my success is being able to give back and help people the way I was helped, once I graduate from college. I was able to maintain a 4.0 GPA throughout all of high school in mainstream classes and plan to maintain a 4.0 going through college. I would encourage others to never stop reaching for their dreams and to keep on persevering even if your goal seems impossible.

What kept you from giving up when things were hard? My parents were a big part in why I never gave up. They never allowed me to use my disability as an excuse to not do something. They sacrificed so much for me throughout the years to help me become the best I could with this disability. I wanted to

give it all I had because of the work they were putting in throughout the years and I didn't want to let them down.

What are you most looking forward to in the future and what makes you feel equipped to handle what the future has in store? After all I have been through over the years, I plan to take my leadership knowledge and become a physical therapist to help people with disabilities be the best they can. I love helping people and it's something I have always been very passionate about. I feel very equipped for the future because of all the support I have had over the years. Whether it was my family, friends, or school, they all helped me get to where I am today and I will always be grateful for their support.