

How has cerebral palsy affected your educational goals and how will the scholarship money help you in reaching your academic goals?

I had a slower start to life. I was born three months early weighing in at less than two pounds. At three days old I suffered a stroke. It was by the grace of God, the skills of my miraculous doctors, and my fighting spirit that I survived. The stroke resulted in left side hemiparesis, which affects me both physically and cognitively.

While there are many things I can't do such as use my left hand, point or flex my left foot, drive a car, ride a bike, or do basic math, I try to stay focused on those things that I can do.

Because of the challenges I face both physically and cognitively I have had to learn to work twice as hard to meet my goals. This is something that has shaped the person I am today. I set lofty goals for myself and then do everything in my power to achieve them.

One of those goals was to do well in high school, while attending mainstream classes I set my sights high and graduated with a 3.7 GPA. Another goal I set for myself was to present a TedX speech as part of my senior project. This was a life changing experience as it helped me work through many of the emotions and struggles that I had faced growing up with a disability. If you'd like to view my TedX talk and get to know me better, you can find it here: <https://youtu.be/L4fX1Ah3jrM>

Education is extremely important to me. Without a degree it will be challenging for me to find meaningful employment and become an independent adult. I am hindered by both the physical and cognitive challenges I face, many of which prevent me from obtaining an entry-level position. While academics are challenging, I am confident I can succeed especially knowing it will lead to a job that will bring meaning to my life.

I am passionate about helping others which has led me to choose clinical counseling as a career. I plan to study Social Work and continue on to gain a master's degree in counseling with a focus on counseling teens. I believe that the challenges I've overcome and experiences I've had will make me a good counselor. If I can make a difference in other's lives and help them to cope with similar challenges, it will mean the world to me.

I am pleased to have received early acceptance to Point Loma Nazarene University for fall 2020 and to be part of their LEAP program, a special program for students like myself who struggle academically. The program will help me adjust and learn the skills I will need to be successful in achieving my academic goals and gaining a degree. PLNU fits my needs well; it is a small campus and students live on campus all four years so I will not have to worry about transportation, cooking my own meals or being overwhelmed by a large number of students and big campus. In

addition to cerebral palsy, I also struggle with anxiety therefore a small, faith-based university is a perfect fit in supporting me emotionally.

The biggest challenge I'm now faced with is the financial support needed to make my dream a reality. While my parents will do their best to cover as much as possible, they aren't able to finance my education in full. Because I struggle with testing, I was unable to qualify for a merit scholarship (my ACT and SAT scores were too low for qualification). Any assistance you can provide would be so very appreciated and I promise that I will pay it forward in a life of giving back to others in whatever way I possibly can.