

## **Allie Curtis, Jackson Area Career Center**

Allie Curtis is an 11th grader and a first-year student in our Health Technician program. Allie is also wheelchair bound and has not let that stop her from pursuing her career goal of being a healthcare worker- she is diligent, a hard worker and incredibly smart. She also leads with compassion and humor which are great qualities for anyone in the healthcare setting. Allie always has a smile on her face, and it is a genuine pleasure to be in her presence. I would love to highlight her story as she has taken the hand she has been dealt and is turning it into a greater purpose and a calling to help others!

Here is a quote from Allie talking about her experience as a student with a disability in a CTE program: " I attend a medical technician program at Jackson Area Career center to kickstart my dream of becoming a registered nurse. I am also physically disabled. I have a genetic condition called Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. This condition has caused me to be a non-ambulatory wheelchair user, and reliant in a port and GJ feeding for nutrition and hydration. My genetic disorder effects the way my body produces collagen, this makes me incredibly hyper mobile. Because of my extreme hyper mobility, I dislocate my joints multiple times a day, every day. It also causes many secondary conditions. My stomach is too weak to digest most food, this is called gastroparesis. My nervous system is imbalanced causing POTS. Two of my arteries in my abdomen are compressed causing MALS and SMAS. I have a few other secondary conditions, but you definitely get the picture. Although these conditions may seem like a burden to many people, I think I am very blessed. I have been through a lot because of my diagnosis, many hospital stays, surgeries, procedures, and more. But this has not and will not define me. I think I'm very lucky to have experienced what I have, because it has made me appreciate life much more. I appreciate the little things, laughing with friends, reading a new book, a hug from the kids I work with more than you could imagine. I take in the big things in a different perspective, I see something scary, and I know I can make it through because I've had to face much worse. My experiences have not only encouraged me to live a fulfilling life, but they've also helped me realize what I was put on this earth to do. I know that I am meant to be a healthcare worker. My dream is to give back to the profession that has saved me time and time again. I want nothing more than to build relationships with patients, to show them that despite any diagnosis there is still so much life to be lived. I think what I have personally been through will help me better connect with my future patients, because I know what it is like to face debilitating symptoms everyday. I know how scary being a patient can be. The fear of not having control of your body is horrifying, but having a healthcare worker that understands you and is trustworthy can be life changing. Jackson Area Career Center has been one of the best things that has ever happened to me. I've been on the patient side for a long time, but seeing the professional side of becoming a healthcare worker is very eye opening. I have made incredible friendships with people that are just as passionate about this field as I am. I have had an amazing teacher that has encouraged me to work hard, and soak in every bit of knowledge I can. Being a disabled student can be very hard, it's difficult not having many people around that can relate to you. But JACC has been more than accommodating and have been very inclusive of me and my disability. I think even experiences like these, that do not entirely center around my disability, will be beneficial for my future connections with patients."

In addition, here is a quote from Allie's Health Technician instructor, Mrs. Joan Schiel: "I can't say enough about this remarkable young lady that is Allie! Not only does she focus on the things she can DO; she doesn't let the things she can't define her. She is a joy to have in the classroom and is a great teammate when she works in groups. Her peers seek her out because she is kind, caring and trustworthy. I have no doubt that Allie will be successful in whatever endeavors she chooses to do!"

