

January 2019



My Life, My Plan

My name is Desirae Kluth but I go by Desi and for so much of my life people had their own plan for my life. They wanted me to live where they said, and they didn't want me to work. When I was little the doctors said that I couldn't ever live on my own or hold a job because it would be too stressful. They told me I would be in assisted living for my whole life. Those people couldn't have been more wrong!

I currently work at The Dollar Tree and have been there for over a year and a half. I got a job by just by walking in and applying without any help. I really like where I work because my boss and co-workers are all so supportive. They are good at noticing when I need a break and will help me out, so I can take time to get centered. My boss said that since hiring me and seeing my determination and hard work that she has started hiring other people with disabilities.

I live in my own apartment and have been for the last four years. Prior to living on my own I lived at a group home, but I wanted to live alone and be independent. I originally had people come in to help me cook and clean, but I felt that those people just got in my way. When I first moved out, I was nervous to live on my own since I had lived in group homes for so long and it was a big change. My friends and family were a huge support and made my move out of the group home a reality.

I like all animals, but cats are much easier to care for, so I am a proud cat mom. I adopted my cat Kiki from the humane society and we have been cuddling ever since. I also plan to volunteer at Haws, walking dogs when it gets warmer out. Not too long ago I took a class to learn how to play guitar and I really want to continue learning. I enjoy writing song parodies and so learning how to play guitar would help so much! Thursdays I have art class and I am currently making a Peace Pole. Creating art is my favorite way to deal with stress and to relax.

In the summer of 2018 I applied to be a Peer Mentor for the Youth Leadership Forum at Edgewood college. I was accepted into YLF as a mentor, and it was a great experience for me. I learned a lot of leadership skills. I plan to apply again this year!

I am currently in the Partners in Policymaking program run by the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. Partners is great because we get to learn about advocacy and how to work with your legislators to help make the world around us a more inclusive place for people with disabilities. I wrote a song about institutions and how far the disability community has come and one of our guest speakers (at Partners) is going to help me record it!