

June 2019 – Lea Seefeldt



*Can Do, Will Do*

My name is Lea Seefeldt and I am 39 years old. I was born with Down Syndrome, a severe congenital heart defect and bilateral hip dysplasia. My father had cancer and died when I was 3 years old. I have an older brother Jon. My mom raised us both in Neenah as a single parent. I loved our neighborhood because there were many kids the same age as my brother and me. We were all good friends. I remember the fun we had playing games together outside.

My mom told me I was the first child with Down Syndrome to enroll in Winnebago County's Birth thru Three program. I was also the first with Downs to be integrated part-time into a regular kindergarten classroom in our public-school system. This was where I began to learn to read. Reading is something I enjoy doing every day. I also like to write fiction stories on my computer. I am a big fan of the Green Bay Packers and Wisconsin's Badgers. I read about them in the newspaper, follow them on-line and watch all their games. I even go to Packer Training camp every summer with my mom to check out the rookies.

Some other activities I enjoy doing include participating with MyTeam Triumph in the Fox Cities Marathon 5K every September. I have a team of Angels from Kimberly-Clark Corp. who push me in my racing cart. We decorate the cart in green and gold because they know how much I love the Packers. I am good at playing board games and cards. I often beat my mom! I have been a member of our local special needs Rotary Club and even gave a speech about our

group at one of their conventions in Green Bay. I especially like doing community service projects to help other people.

In 2004, I built my own Habitat for Humanity's home along with my friend Jill. We have lived there for 15 years. I love my house and the support staff that help me live on my own. My house is handicapped accessible because I have had 4 hip reconstruction surgeries and 3 hip joint replacement surgeries over a period of 32 years. My mom says it is my "can do" attitude that always keeps me going.

I had many job experiences when I participated in our high school's school-to-work program. I have been a dining room attendant at our local McDonald's and an assistant at Theda Clark's Print & Sign Shop. I have done data entry in our Navy Recruiter's Office and have volunteered doing office projects in our Special Olympic office.

After high school, I was hired to work as a stock clerk at Shopko. I loved my job and my store teammates. I am proud to say I worked there for 20 years before the store was closed. I have also been a participant in Goodwill's Prevocational Program for several years where I have learned more about the retail business. I have volunteered in Hoover Elementary School's library and office for 20 years as well. In 2002 I was named Hoover's Volunteer of the Year. Later that same year, I was selected to receive the State of Wisconsin's "Friend of Education" award from the State's Superintendent of Schools. In 2012, I was chosen to be the official ribbon cutter for the Grand Re-Opening of our Menasha's Goodwill. That was fun!

Recently I started working with a job counselor in our Department of Vocational Rehabilitation's office. Lisa is helping me to write my job resume. Soon I will begin looking for another job in my community. I am hoping to find a job doing data entry and other office work.

I feel I am very lucky. I have my own home and many good friends. I especially enjoy working hard at my jobs and getting to do so many fun things in my community.