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*“Getting My Wheels By Using My Voice”*

My name is Odessa Reinwand and I’m a self-advocate and I live in Wisconsin Rapids. I’m a nice person to everyone because my grandmother raised me that way. Being nice and accepting of people makes life easier for everyone and trying to have a positive attitude, while hard sometimes, is very important to me. I live in my own apartment and work in my community. It’s about a 40-mile round trip for me to get to and from work which I really don’t mind since being able to drive myself around is a great level of freedom. I always say, “I’m a girl with wheels and I can get myself around!” I spend a lot of time planning trips that I want to take in the future. My list is big but since I love Disney, Florida and California are at the top of my list followed by a return trip to New York City.

I was diagnosed with ADHD and a cognitive impairment, I don’t see myself as disabled. In fact, quite the opposite. Everyone has challenges in life, and I’ve found ways to live the life

that I want without getting caught up with labels. When I first moved into my own apartment, I had some supporters that would come in to help me with different things to help me be more independent but over time I learned new skills and was able to slowly work off having my supporters help me. I think that is the way it should be for most people moving out on their own for the first time.

I have two jobs that I work currently. I am employed through Opportunities Development Centers Inc and at the local parish, which I call Saint Brons. While I really like my jobs, my real career goal is to be a writer and get some of my work published. I mostly write fantasy stories and I love adding twists to them. I'm a big fan of JK Rowling and C.S. Lewis and I want to tell stories that have big worlds and characters to fill out because I have a lot of stories in that I would like to tell. One of my favorite stories to tell is about the villains of classic stories. Seeing a well-known story or world from a different point of view is fascinating to me.

Growing up I was told that I wouldn't be able to do so many things in my life and I never understood why people would say those things. My mom always told me that I would never be able to drive, so when I moved to Wisconsin Rapids it was the first thing that I did. It took me two times to pass the online test but I passed the driving test on the first try! I now feel like I have so much more freedom with where I can go and what I can do. Even as an adult I'm still told that I won't be able to do things. Recently after participating in the BPDD Living Well project, I used information on my rights to advocate for getting a smartphone, debit card and a YMCA membership. Learning about my rights was a surprise to me and I just want people to know more about their rights, their voice and the importance of both.

My advice to everyone reading is that even though life can get hard, keep doing what you're doing and keep pushing yourself to have a voice. Eventually things will turn around.