

July 2022



It's Just A Little "Extra"

My name is Jennifer (Jen) Strauss and I am 45 years old. I have Mosaic Down Syndrome. I am originally from South Florida but moved to Wisconsin in September 2016 staying with family for the first 9 months until moving to Montello in June 2017. I am a lifetime ambassador for the non-profit Down Syndrome organization called Nothing Down.

My advocacy journey started in October 2011 by doing inspirational videos in the month of October for Down Syndrome Awareness/Acceptance Month and World Down Syndrome Day on March 21st. I would talk about my life with it or facts about it. The Down Syndrome colors are Blue and Yellow.

I first became an ambassador for Nothing Down in February 2019 by partaking in some projects that were very much fun including putting a pie in my face. By World Down Syndrome Day March 21, 2020, I became their lifetime ambassador. With COVID-19 in its early phase, everything that I wanted to do that year halted to a complete stop. I even broke my ankle that year so things were a bit rough but I got through it. Later in that year, I submitted a picture to NDSS (National Down Syndrome Society) to be on the Jumbotron in Times Square. That aired virtually on September 26, 2020. It was the best seven seconds of my life. I was even in the NDSS calendar for 2021. This year, I'm in GiGi's Playhouse calendar.

What I want people to know about people with disabilities: There are many different kinds of disability, and one disability isn't any better or worse than the other. All people with any disability should always be treated with acceptance and respect. Disabilities can be hard, but they aren't always. Some disabled people benefit from privilege, others not so much, and what

most disabled people want the most deeply is to be seen, heard, believed, and taken seriously.

The 3 biggest issues I'd like to see changed or made better for people with disabilities are: social inclusion in any community for people with disabilities, better healthcare access, and most importantly stop using the "R" word for it is such a disgrace to even hear. Most are offended by that word so I really urge everyone to not use it. I don't care what context you say it in, just don't say it.

Now let me tell you some things about me: I have a younger sister, I am a one-of-a-kind, and I have such an amazing memory. I often can get a read on someone pretty quickly. I love wolves and would even say that I'm obsessed with them. I have a wonderful cat, Abbie who is my life. I am very determined, understandable, reliable, dependable, friendly and charming with a magnetic personality. I am respectful along with having great manners and being polite. I am sympathetic and compassionate - I will always understand. Inquisitive, and creative. My hobbies include: Listening to all kinds of music, the 80's & 90's are my favorite era, dancing, reading, writing, journaling, yoga, researching, poetry, and most importantly I am passionate about photography. My 3 favorite musical groups are: Disturbed, Skillet and Five Finger Death Punch.