



Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

www.wi-bpdd.org

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I'm Lauren Tierney and I'm from the Madison area. I've been an advocate for people with disabilities since I was born with Cerebral Palsy. Currently, I'm finishing up my 18-21 program getting experience in early childhood development because I want to work with children. I have some mobility but usually use my wheelchair for longer distances and because of my eyesight. While my high school wasn't very accessible for me, much of what I'm doing now has been very accommodating. When I was in the high school building it was hard to get around from class to class sometimes and so I worked with my parents and some other folks from the school to advocate for more accessible options. The building wasn't accessible but because I was in general education classes, most of my teachers were very helpful in finding ways to make sure I could participate with everyone else.

I recently went through the WI Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) and it has really opened my future in advocacy. I got connected to people at LOV inc which has been a wonderful experience for me connecting to the community. I've been able to do adaptive fitness and meet so many people. Since going to YLF, I was also able to join the Madison chapter of People First WI. Over the summer I attended the Madison Disability Pride Festival, and I was blown away at how many people were there and at how easy it was to network with people. I even turned one of the connections into an internship with the City of Madison for this fall! that I have participated in the Beyond Compliance Coalition meetings, where I share my experiences with struggles of accessibility out in the community.

As I get older and more connected to my community, I see transportation as one of the biggest barriers in my life. Getting around town can be hard but anytime I take a trip flying, I have so many issues with connecting flights and having my wheelchair broken which can take months to get fixed and it's very expensive. Now I always travel with a wheelchair and walker repair kit because it happens so often.

During High School I read two books that inspired me to do more advocacy and even write my own book. The books are *Sitting Pretty: The View from My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body* By Rebekah Tausing_ and *Against Technoableism: Rethinking Who Needs Improvement* by Ashley Shew inspired me to write a book my goal is to write the book as a way for people who aren't familiar with disabilities so that they can learn from my experience and of others. As of now, I've written chapters focused on CP but I'm looking to expand to cover many other facets of disabilities.

I dream that in the future it will be easier to find personal care workers and that it's easier to get around because I don't drive. It also is so surprising the number of buildings that aren't accessible, and I'd love to see more universal design used in all buildings. It's all too common that people don't take the disabled community seriously and don't listen to our needs. If we were at the table and listened to, the world would be more accessible for everyone. Along with my Cerebral Palsy diagnosis, I also have ADHD and vision problems. I want people to know how physical and cognitive conditions affect people, especially when someone has both. Some disabilities are invisible, and some aren't, but both can change how people experience the world.