

April 2017



SUCCEED is a program designed for developmentally and intellectually disabled students that range from ages 18-25. Students earn a Chancellor's Certificate upon successful completion of the two year program. The program includes student life experiences, academic courses, and vocational experiences. The students live on campus and gain independence and skills to help in transitioning to their next stage of life. This program both highlights and celebrates diversity as it creates opportunities for students to break down stereotypes and forge through barriers both on and off campus.

Still relatively new, to date, two cohorts have successfully completed the SUCCEED program. The program alumni have started to build successful foundations within the community. Erin Jacobson is one SUCCEED graduate that is most certainly making waves. Erin has both a visual and hearing impairment, a developmental delay, and manages day to day life after an emergency ileostomy. Her diagnoses attributed to deteriorating health during her time at SUCCEED. At times balancing school, work, friends, and maintaining proper health could become quite overwhelming. Erin recalls, "I had to find hope each and every day to gain strength to continue. Many days I wanted to just give up, but I had my family to lean on." Not only did Erin manage to continue, but absolutely flourished. Despite many adverse conditions, Erin maintained all A's and graduated from the SUCCEED Program in May of 2016. This was no easy task and Erin takes great pride in her immense academic accomplishments.

In less than three short months after commencement, Erin secured steady employment, moved into her own apartment, and became an active member in her community. She is a teacher's assistant at Bright Horizon Preschool in Brentwood, MO and identifies her favorite part of the job to be seeing her students learn to walk and talk. Erin has always had a passion for working with young children. While at SUCCEED, she was able to further develop skills related to early childhood education through participating in credit courses such as EDUC 1000: Building Community, Culture, and Learning in Education, and ED PSY 2212: Child and Adolescent Development and through paid employment at the University Childhood Development Center (UCDC). Erin greatly credits her internship and vocational curriculum while at SUCCEED with helping her achieve her employment goals. Her time at UCDC afforded her work experience, skill development, and networking opportunities in her desired career field. She also credits mock interviews and job skill development in her course work for preparing her for the real world and

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giving her the confidence in herself and her skills to be successful. Erin's experience successfully navigating a post-secondary education program for students with disabilities even led to an invitation from Dr. Grace Francis to present a guest lecture on transition at George Mason University in Washington D.C.

Erin manages her day to day tasks independently. She utilizes Uber and Call-a-Ride for transportation. Erin does receive some independent supported living arrangement supports from St. Louis Arc. Initially, Erin would receive weekly support, but now she just has monthly visits from St. Louis Arc. Services included support and advisement in areas including grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, and connecting with community resources. Erin commented that this was incredibly helpful right at the beginning. Erin's home also had to be set up in order to provide her a safe and effective living space. Everything in her home is labeled with bumps or barcodes. Special technology allows her to scan barcodes to learn about a product, especially if the print is too small. She also utilizes a special television that connects with her computer. Erin's apartment is a first floor apartment so she does not have to worry about daily navigation of steps. While it took some time for her apartment to come together, Erin is very comfortable and takes great pride in the space she has made into a home. Erin admits the best parts of living alone are freedom, determining her own schedule, and not having anyone boss her around! She credits SUCCEED with allowing Erin to successfully plan, prepare, and develop skills necessary to take this step into living independently. Erin still checks in with her family and sees them on weekends, but she is most certainly enjoying a living space of her own. She would eventually like to get a dog for some companionship in her home, but she wants to allow herself a bit more transition time before adding care for a dog to her routine.

Erin's life is not just all work; she definitely makes time for play. She regularly attends yoga and has established a close friendship with a woman from her yoga class. She also enjoys movies and bowling that are often coordinated through the St. Louis Arc Leisure Department. She prioritizes socializing and makes sure she attends a social function at least once a week. She looks forward to playing the role of hostess for friends in the near future. When Erin reflects on life in her short time since leaving SUCCEED, she marvels at how far she has come and how fast she is achieving her goals. She knew she wanted a job after SUCCEED and to move out on her own, but she has surprised herself with how quickly she has successfully achieved these goals. She commented, "I knew what I wanted, my goals, and exactly what I wanted to be." She has most certainly found her way there! When asked to describe her experience from her time at SUCCEED to where she is today, Erin replied, "Whirlwind! I am so happy with where I am!"