

Birth Defects

Megan's Story

Megan is an adult living with Down syndrome. Read her inspiring story on graduating college and pursuing her dreams.

My name is Megan McCormick. I am 31 years old and the youngest of six siblings. When my parents told me that I had [Down syndrome](#), I didn't know exactly what it was, but I knew it meant I'd have to work much harder to achieve my goals in life. My parents and siblings never treated me like I had a disability, and they set a high bar of expectations for me. I am grateful for the support I received not just from my family, but from teachers, tutors, and coaches along the way, who raised the bar, advocated for me, and helped me accomplish my dreams.

As a child, I attended public schools in Lexington, Kentucky, where I was included in regular classes and graduated with my peers. To get college credits during my junior and senior years of high school, I took courses at a technical school, and at my high school graduation, I was recognized as a Governor's Scholar. In the Fall of 2007, I enrolled at Bluegrass Community and Technical College, where I eventually chose to major in education. I enjoyed working with children during my internships, specifically elementary school children. Thanks to support from my professors, tutors, and fellow classmates, I graduated in 2013 with my associate degree in education, making the Dean's List. Teaching assistant positions in Lexington were very competitive at the time, so I decided to go back to school to pursue a 4-year college degree. I began courses at the University of Kentucky (UK) in the Fall of 2014, while continuing to work part-time in after-school programs and as a substitute teaching assistant. My family was very supportive, helping me find academic coaches who would attend classes with me to make sure that I stayed on track with my course work. I'm proud to share that in May 2019 I graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in liberal studies.

[Graduating from UK was a huge accomplishment that I made happen!](#)

Employment is important to me because it gives me the opportunity to give back to children in the same way my teachers helped me. I am blessed to work in an elementary school in which the principal is committed to inclusion and determined to make sure that I am successful; the same elementary school I attended when I started school in Lexington!

But I have other dreams too. I was determined to get my driver's license so I could drive to work. I continue to stay involved with Special Olympics, swimming competitively and serving as an advocate for health, wellness, and [inclusion programs](#) for people with intellectual disabilities. Just like you, I want to be an active member of my community and be allowed to contribute and give back. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story.

—Megan

My sister has always been a source of inspiration to me, and watching her journey has taught me many valuable lessons about perseverance and maintaining a positive attitude despite facing incredible challenges. I am so proud to see her working in an elementary school classroom, serving as a role model for other children and families. However, the barriers to post-secondary education and full-time employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities are numerous. While not every individual may be able to follow the same path as my sister, everyone has unique gifts and capabilities that can be shared and valued within a community. We hope schools, universities, and employers will consider Megan's story as an example of what can be possible with the right support.

— Nimalie Stone, CDC Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion and proud sister.



