

## *Saraann Skalka*

*My name is Saraann Skalka. I am a Gateway High School graduate who was born prematurely at 26 weeks with a debilitating physical disability called Cerebral Palsy (CP). CP impacts a person's ability to move and maintain balance and posture. There is no cure.*

*Although I was only diagnosed with this disability at the age of 7, I've suffered from this condition my entire life. I find that this disability limits not only my physical capabilities (such as walking, standing, and even sitting), but also puts a severe strain on my social life and mental health as well. Several other health issues stemmed from my diagnosis such as anxiety, depression, and Scoliosis. Growing up, and still to this day, I have been bullied and belittled by my peers for being disabled. Because of the unfortunate stigma around physical disabilities, bullying, and every day struggles, I have over time developed depression and anxiety. Every day is a constant battle between my body and mind with no relief. I am reminded daily of the normal, everyday tasks that I cannot do due to my disability, which weighs heavily on my mind and spirit.*

*Even though there is currently no cure for Cerebral Palsy, there are multiple solutions that can be utilized in order to make living with this disability less strenuous. The most impactful solution is acquiring a Service Dog, but it can be very costly. Therefore, I am in desperate need of your help. Please consider donating money to my fund at New Hope Assistance Dogs, Inc. in order to help me acquire a Service Dog.*

*A service dog will help me in a multitude of ways including, but not limited to:*

- *Keeping my balance as I walk or stand*
- *Providing me with solid support when I need to stand in one place for more than a few seconds*
  - *Preventing me from falling and getting even more injured*
  - *Providing me with comfort during a depression spell or anxiety attack*
- *Providing me with a sense of independence and responsibility by allowing me to be less reliant on the people around me*

*That being said, I hope that you find it in your heart to donate to my cause of acquiring a service dog, that will assist me in my everyday life. Please also feel free to share this with other people you may know that could be of assistance. I sincerely thank you for taking the time to read my story.*

*Best regards,*

*Saraann Skalka*