

Deshae Lott Ministries Inc

## Meet the 2010-2011 Recipients of CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries **Outreach Program Scholarships**

### **Jeffery Lester** **Recipient of a \$1000**

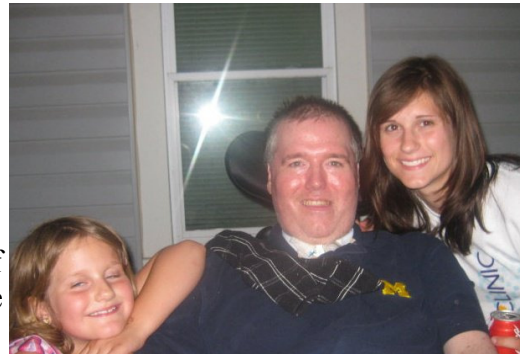
#### **Outreach Program Scholarship**

Jeffery is seeking an M.B.A. and an M.S. in Finance at the University of Michigan at Dearborn. In the face of the most severe disease progression of any of the candidates we reviewed, Jeff was also the most accomplished and the most determinedly

engaged in very aspect of a full and productive life.

He has ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), is on a ventilator and requires assistance with all daily tasks except for seeing and hearing. Since his diagnosis 16 years ago at the age of 26, he opted to forego the doctor's advice to "basically go home and begin planning my funeral," and instead has repeatedly confounded the skeptics, getting married, starting a family, and continuing to work in his family's business and maintain his responsibilities as a husband and father even as his disease has progressed. He has also maintained a superb academic record despite the fact that his Vocational Rehabilitation counselor had declared his educational goals "too lofty and unreasonable". Jeffery writes, "Soon after my diagnosis, I decided that no one controlled or determined my life's destiny except myself and God, and God had seen to it that I had been given many gifts including the will, determination and sheer tenacity to overcome any expectation or obstacle placed in my way. What I quickly learned early in my journey was that physical abilities do not define your life, because as I grew weaker physically, I became so much stronger mentally, emotionally and spiritually, which has more than offset my physical disability."

In addition to achieving his professional goals in business and finance and his personal goals of providing nurture and support for his wife Lisa and their three children, Jeffrey sees himself as an advocate and a role model for others with severe disabilities. "While it is important to shatter the walls that the world puts around those with disabilities, I believe it is more important to change the limiting self-perceptions that so many people who are disabled continue to embrace. My education is giving me the confidence and tools to become a force for change to shatter walls and re-shape perceptions. This will be my life's avocation during the remaining days of my life's journey."



*Jeff Lester with daughters Emily (L) and Kelsey (R)*



## **Tess Hazenberg**

### **Recipient of a \$500 Outreach Program Scholarship**

Tess is seeking a Masters in Social Work from Michigan State University. She has Spinal Muscular Atrophy, Type 3 (Kugelberg-Welander Disease), which manifests as progressive muscle weakness. She requires daily assistance with mobility, hygiene, toileting, dressing, transportation and housekeeping. Tess studied psychology as an undergraduate, knowing that she wanted to enter a helping profession. She writes, "With a growing number of experiences and classes under my belt, including a study-abroad class focused on Disability Studies, I became chiefly interested in the idea of someday pursuing work as an advocate for persons with disabilities. It is my hope that I will be able to

make a change in the perceived lower value of individuals with disabilities, not only in the minds of those living with disabilities through clinical practice, but in the mind of the public as well." Of her own spiritual journey, she writes, "As a Christian, I believe we are called to seek justice and redeem the world around us; responding to this calling is beneficial to society and to the Creation, as well as to ourselves as individuals."

A graduate of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Tess maintained an excellent academic record while serving as a Resident Assistant in a women's dormitory, and as a member of the college's Accessibility Advisory Committee. Across the board, her academic references call attention to her impressive organizational and time management skills, her thoughtful and nuanced approach to complex issues, and her sweet spirit and capacity for putting others at ease.

Tess hopes to focus her studies and future work on "creating settings and activities where people with disabilities can comfortably interact with people without disabilities, and vice versa," so that "the importance of acting justly and proactively on behalf of people with disabilities [becomes] a general mindset and goal. Communities are happier when diverse groups know more about each other."



## Park McArthur

### Recipient of a \$500

### Outreach Program Scholarship

Park holds a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the University of Miami (summa cum laude, 2009) and has been accepted to a 9-month, seminar-based independent study program for artists, curators and critical theorists at the Whitney Museum in New York City.

Park has Limb Girdle Muscular Dystrophy, and requires assistance with mobility, personal hygiene and grooming, meal planning, food preparation, eating, transportation and housekeeping. In her essay, she writes, “This summer, July 2010 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. As one of the most recent revolutions in America, disability rights and disability culture are still gaining traction as sources of activism, pride and creative activity. My work as an artist is resolutely situated within this wider context of civic and cultural revolution. My life and perspective are shaped by the physical limitations of my degenerative disease. Therefore, studying and documenting my personal mobility in relation to social constructions of human mobility has become a political and personal project.”



Her academic experience has given rise to certain questions that she seeks to investigate through her art: “How do I as an artist whose realities challenge barriers of structure and stereotypes, change the expectations of revolution and culture to create new models for civic activity? For example, can I use my physical weakness as a source of vitality and creativity in a culture that prizes strength and independence? How do our personal realities provide opportunities for critical thinking? What does the raised fist gesture of political solidarity look like if one cannot raise one’s fist?”



As the first person with a visible physical disability to enter the Whitney’s Independent Study program, she hopes to bring issues of disability and mobility to the cultural conversation, creating “new visual and linguistic metaphors that are meaningful, powerful, inclusive and complex.”

**Reports of Mobility: Shibuya Station** by Park McArthur