



Deshae Lott Ministries Inc

## Meet the 2012-2013 Recipients of CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries **Outreach Program Scholarships**

### **Rebecca Parten**

**Recipient of a \$2500  
CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries  
Outreach Program Scholarship**



**Rebecca Parten**, a repeat recipient of a CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Scholarship, continues to pursue a Masters of Social Work from the University of Michigan, with a concentration in Community Organizing in Health. She obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Communications from University of Michigan at Dearborn.

Rebecca has Multiple Pterygium Syndrome, Escobar Variant. The result is short stature, spinal defects, joint contractures and webbing of all her joints, making it impossible for her to straighten her limbs or stand upright. Her kyphosis, or spinal curvature, causes respiratory insufficiency, so that she requires constant oxygen support as well as BiPap support at night. She requires assistance with all activities of daily living except written and spoken communication.

In her original application, Rebecca wrote, "Growing up with a very apparent and physically limiting disability has given me a unique opportunity and passion to use my experience to help others." She wasted no time in making that a priority during her undergraduate years,, founding a campus organization called the Alliance for Disability Awareness, through which she gained experience in event planning and public advocacy. On behalf of the organization, she presented reports on disability issues throughout the area, and spearheaded three campus-wide events. As a project for one of her Communications classes, she was required to develop an action plan for an awareness campaign, including developing a legislative strategy, crafting legislation, and developing a communications arm of the project to connect to voters. Her professors praised not only the quality of her work in all her endeavors, but also the spirit in which she approached it. Jeff Lester, former scholarship recipient and now a member of our Outreach Selection Committee, knew Rebecca at the University of Michigan at Dearborn and had this to say: "Not once during the several years I have known her has she ever displayed any frustration with the obstacles and expectations that society places on those of us who are disabled. She chooses to educate through her actions and positive spirit that shines as brightly as anyone."

In this year's application letter, Rebecca reports that she will be interning with Arbor Hospice, whose mission is to "give comfort, assurance and care to families and patients who have life-limiting illnesses and to educate and nurture others in this care." She can choose an area of concentration; general hospice, pediatric hospice or grief support. Whatever she chooses, her skills will be transferable, as her major emphasis will be on grant-writing, in keeping with her passion for advocacy of those with disabilities. In negotiating all of the red tape and road blocks along her own path, she has become acutely aware of the problems faced by those with disabilities comparable to hers, but without the skills or the support of friends and family with which she has been blessed. As Rebecca says, "I want to be a voice for those who don't have what I have. This is what drives my desire to become a social worker, and what drives my life."

**Claire Abraham**  
Recipient of a \$1500  
CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries  
Outreach Program Scholarship



Claire is seeking a Master of Science in Information from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has Spinal Muscular Atrophy Type 2, a hereditary neuromuscular disease that is profoundly progressive. Diagnosed in infancy, she never walked or crawled. She has used a power wheelchair since the age of 3. She requires assistance with all everyday activities listed on our application except communication (writing, typing, speaking, etc.), seeing and hearing.

She tells us she has been blessed with a supportive family, including a mother who drove 40 minutes each way to take her to classes at the University of Michigan, where she majored in English with a minor in Russian Language, Literature and Culture. However, she realized she could not have the full college experience until she could live independently on campus. In working through the transition

of finding accessible living space, hiring caregivers and managing all the details, she essentially found her calling: to share her own experiences and resources with other disabled young adults making the transition from high school to college, and to help them connect with each other. With a Master of Science in Information, specializing in Community Informatics, she hopes to develop ways to use social media and other tools of technology to help disadvantaged communities share resources for the purpose of developing cohesion and mutual support. She writes, “An organizational movement utilizing social media would possibly inspire more students with disabilities to live on campus whilst attending university. At the very least, this endeavor would give young adults a chance to connect with others in similar situations, thus creating more cohesion within the community through information/resource sharing.”

Lisa Hermaine Makman, a professor of English Language and Literature who taught Claire in several classes, says in her recommendation, “Claire is among the most engaged students I have encountered in fifteen years of teaching undergraduates...She not only brings to her endeavors the resources of a powerful creative intelligence, but resources not as easy to measure: maturity, good sense, ethical strength and kindness.”

**Tiffane King**  
**Recipient of a \$1500**  
**CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries**  
**Outreach Program Scholarship**

Tiffane is going to the Irvine School of Law at the University of California. She sustained a nearly-fatal, traumatic spinal cord injury in 2005, and needs assistance with mobility, transferring and position changing; personal care; occupational therapy, physical therapy; routine medical procedures; and housekeeping.

Upon her initial release from the hospital, she was shocked by the lack of continuity of care, the fact that physical therapy was impossible to attain, and the fact that there was no system of protocols to systematically address and monitor the needs of someone in her condition. She became a relentless advocate for her own care, and has determined that what she has so painstakingly carved out for herself should be the general protocol for everyone in her condition.

To hear her tell her own story, “ As a formerly active, able-bodied woman suddenly thrown into the world of the disabled, I obtained a unique and painful perspective on rejection and discrimination that can only be achieved by way of experience. ..Within our general society, there were times when I was looked over, discriminated against an disallowed access because of my disability. An initial ‘handicap’ that I fought to overcome was the feeling of being “small” in a society that was enormous, established an set in its ways.

Therefore, she continues, “It is my intense focus and aspiration to specialize in disability law. This will prepare me to engage in the sophisticated representation of a traditionally underserved population and its interests, and it will enable me to serve and represent this population who lack adequate access to law and lawyers.”

