

From orphanage to Oxford



Jessica DeLaurier's life has transformed from her early days in an orphanage to the start of her college career at UW-Washington County in West Bend.

Born in China with spina bifida and scoliosis, Jessica DeLaurier spent the first years of her life in a Chinese orphanage. Adopted by a West Bend family at age seven, she underwent several surgeries and took her very first steps in the living room of her new home at age eight.

"For years, doctors said I would never be able to walk, that I would be confined to a wheelchair," she says. "My mom had other ideas."

The doctors were wrong. Her mom was right.

Jessica still deals with her physical challenges daily, however, today she's walking with a cane and a four-inch lift in her right shoe. Instead of focusing on limitations, she embraces "the things that I can

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do and do them to the best of my ability.”

That includes "the best start" to her college career at [University of Wisconsin-Washington County](#) [1] in West Bend, where she began her freshman year in the fall of 2011. Jessica serves as a student senator for the Student Governance Association and a member of Campus Impact. She also was assistant director for the spring 2012 theater production.

“Jessica is a great student and very active on campus and is such an asset to our community,” says Dan Anhalt, director of continuing education.

An inspiration to many, Jessica offers these words of wisdom: “Everyone has a disability, some more noticeable than others. But if you set limits for yourself as a result of it, then you will always be stuck in that same place. If you want change, make it happen. Go for it!”

Jessica is doing just that. She plans to major in clinical psychology with an emphasis in children and adolescents.

In the summer of 2012, she took another step on her journey via a full scholarship — which UW Colleges awards to only one student — for a two-week study abroad program at Oxford University in England.

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