

Overcoming Roadblocks



Madison Copot shares her story while sitting in Goodwin Hall on December 5.

Alone. Misunderstood. Afraid and hopeless. That's how Madison Copot felt when she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis at the age of 12. Despite having to face the challenges that come with Multiple sclerosis, Madison, who is now 19, doesn't let this condition define or limit her.

By Roshelle Rodriguez

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a disease in which the protective sheath that is wrapped around the nerve fibers in the brain, spinal cord, and through the rest of the body, is destroyed by one's own body. This damages the communication between the brain and the rest of the body causing problems with mobility.



Madison makes her way down Goodwin Hall after a long day at school on December 5.



Before getting inside her car, Madison first puts away her walker in her car's trunk.

Even though several of her adult relatives lived with MS, it was not a common disease seen amongst children. Madison recalls being unable to relate to her family members because of the age differences.

Because her symptoms were not evident, Madison decided to keep her diagnosis from her friends. It wasn't until Madison was 15 years old that she began having problems walking. Her secret slowly began to surface.



While most of the people around her were supportive, Madison struggled with friends that believed she could no longer participate in outside-of-school outings or events.

Madison enters her history class in Kindlon Hall on November 18.



Cheerful for her Women in American History class in Kindlon Hall, Madison prepares to take notes on her laptop on November 18.

Having a physical disability does not translate into being helpless, though. Madison is proud to be an independent woman who can drive and cook for herself like any other individual. Her hope is that people look beyond her physical disability and refrain from treating her any differently than any other individual.

Her scholarships and high grades have been an accomplishment for Madison. She is a sophomore at Benedictine University double majoring in Accounting and Business Analytics, hoping to become a financial accountant for a small company. Madison highly values her alone time, but that doesn't stop her from loving to socialize with other people. She is deeply involved in The Theta Phi Alpha Sorority of the University.



Madison reads an article on her laptop for her IDS course while sitting in Kindlon Hall on November 18.



Madison and Alanna Davis take a couple moments outside of Goodwin Hall to discuss how the Theta Phi Alpha gift wrapping fundraiser went on December 5.

As the Philanthropy and Community Chair, Madison coordinates several community service renderings with various organizations, including Mutual Ground--a treatment center in Aurora for women and children that have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault, amongst others.

Madison is eager for the next couple semesters in that she will have a different role as the Academic Excellence Chair. She'll be ensuring that the other members of the sorority are maintaining their grades and proving helpful resources and support when needed.



Although a bit scared, Madison is optimistic about her future. She's excited to move out of Chicago to a warmer state. Her plans include to transfer to the Benedictine Mesa campus, where she will be able to better experience her independence.

“Everyone has a road-block they’ve got to overcome.”

Madison’s journey with MS has been a learning process. She continues to train on a weekly basis to maintain and improve her mobility. Physical therapy and Spynga---a workout that combines indoor cycling and yoga, keep Madison strong. “I see people walking and I don’t understand how they do it, but when I get to simulate walking by using the harness ...It's amazing”. Eventually, Madison hopes to transition from using a walker to using a cane.



Her specialized indoor-cycling shoes attach to the bike’s pedals and allow Madison to continually pedal.