



Congratulations Jazzi Hardy! **2023 Yes I Can! Award - Self Advocacy**



Rose'Ja "Jazzi" Hardy currently participates in the Muskegon Area ISD's Transition Program at the Craig Campus. Jazzi has overcome significant challenges posed by her impaired vision, physical challenges, and difficulties in producing intelligible speech, and uses her exceptional self-advocacy skills to meet her needs as well as improve the lives of the people and community around her. Jazzi also receives services from the Muskegon Area ISD's Assistive Technology team and the Teacher Consultant for the Visually Impaired. She also partners with students at the Biotech Engineering Program at the ISD's Career Tech Center to co-design adaptive equipment to increase her independence and expand her job responsibilities in her current place of employment.

Jazzi exemplifies the power of self-advocacy in improving the lives of individuals with disabilities, recently coordinating communication between service providers to ensure a funding request was successfully submitted for the acquisition of a new communication device. In order to complete activities of daily living, Jazzi also connected with a representative from the Muskegon Area Transit System (MATS) to report her concerns about an unsupported interaction she recently had with a MATS bus driver. Unfortunately the driver was dismissive of Jazzi's attempts to communicate with him using her communication supports, and was unable to effectively share her message about her needed stop. Following her report to a Transit representative about this interaction, instruction regarding supportive communication strategies has been provided to all MATS bus drivers.

Jazzi is currently employed in the food services department of Muskegon High School, a job she obtained just after the pandemic after filling out several applications with repeated follow up calls to numerous employers. Jazzi continues to show the drive and skills to communicate with others in her community so that she can achieve the goals she sets for herself. Jazzi's valuable contributions are not simply limited to productivity, she enhances her workplace's culture.