

“She attends her best friend’s games, even though she can’t play. Hayden wanted to share something she did well with her friend,” said Melissa.

Optimist Members are pleased that Hayden also shared her message with them. Hopefully, her dream will soon become a reality.

## Here is a selection from Hayden’s inspirational essay -



I have cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy is a birth defect that can damage kids' brains, cause tight muscles and twist bones. Sometimes I feel like it's hard to fit in because I am different from my friends. My dream is to be treated just like everyone else and make sure people do not feel sorry for someone with a disability. In order to make my dream come true, I try to teach people about CP and what it is like to have a disability.

I am the only person in my school using an iPad in class. Even though I want to try and write, I get told I have to use the iPad because my writing is bad.

It can be embarrassing to have other kids look at me and wonder why I am using it. If they ask, I explain that my fingers don't work as well as most people.

It's hard to have cerebral palsy because sometimes everyone feels sorry for you when they see you having surgery or needing adaptive technology. It also means lots of surgery and stuff that is not fun like Botox injections, physical therapy, stretching and sleeping in a knee immobilizer or wearing braces on your legs, like I do.

I am lucky because some kids with cerebral palsy can't walk or talk. I could not walk until I was 3. Then I had a lot of surgeries. When I was younger, I was in the hospital for five weeks then needed to use

a wheelchair. For four years in a row I had another surgery. Sometimes in school, kids would try and push my wheelchair like it was a toy. Or they would talk to me like I was a baby because I needed to use a walker. This made me mad. Or they would be really nice to me just because I had surgery and they feel sorry for me. I did not like this either. It was frustrating.

My mom and I made a photo album that told my story and explained what cerebral palsy is and why I needed surgery. The most important part is where we described just because I cannot walk as well as everyone else

does not mean my feelings are any different. I can still do most activities, have fun and be a good friend. Every year we share this book with my class so they can learn about my disability. This helps me with my dream of not being treated any differently and also tells my classmates not to feel sorry for me.

Lots of times doctors, teachers and even my parents will say things might be too hard for me. I almost didn't get to enter this contest because my mom said there were a lot of rules to follow. But my family knows I try and they say as long as I try they are proud of me. They have taught me to always be brave and strong and do my best.



By telling other people my story they have a better understanding of what life can be like for someone with cerebral palsy and hopefully make them understand that a person with a disability is just like everyone else. Even though I am still a kid, I feel like I am doing a good job with my dream because I have taught a lot of people how to treat a person with a disability fairly. This makes me feel successful.



*Thanks to the Optimist Club of West St Paul for sharing information on their scholarship contest.*