

GIFT YOUR GRATITUDE

DANI'S STORY

When our daughter, Dani, was born, doctors told us not to expect much from our child. They told us she would likely never walk, talk or become a contributing member of society. Thankfully they couldn't have been more wrong.

Dani is a typical ten-year-old, who just happens to have Down Syndrome. But she has never let her diagnosis stop her from achieving anything. As a baby, Dani loved the water, she would jump into any pool and come up giggling. Because of her "no fear" mentality, we knew it was time for swimming lessons to keep her safe. When she was 7, Dani began swim lessons at the Y. At first, she struggled, but she kept trudging along.



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One day, we had the chance to watch a swim meet. Dani loved it, proclaiming that one day she was going to “win all the races!” We learned the Y had an adaptive swim team for Special Olympics, and couldn't wait to sign her

up! Unfortunately, swim team comes at a cost, and having a child with special needs brings a number of financial hardships. We were devastated when we couldn't afford it.

Then, something amazing happened. If you don't already know, the YMCA is like family. And in that moment, our Y family rallied around us. The staff and members heard about our situation and asked to support Dani and her dream. Because of the Y, Dani was able to join the swim team. She practiced daily, working hard to master her swim strokes. Her persistence paid off, and not only did she make it to the Special Olympics, but she won a Silver Medal! We are so proud and so grateful to the YMCA of Greater Cleveland, for giving Dani the opportunity to chase her dreams.

- Sandy T.

