



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Jada's Story: Love for the Game

Jada, 16, is an inspiring young woman whose life revolves around family and basketball. She learned the game of basketball at the early age of four. As her love for the game grew, she became very dedicated with aspirations to play at the High School and Collegiate level. At the age of 10, Jada was faced with a major obstacle, she was diagnosed with Rheumatic Heart Disease and was told her basketball dreams would change forever.



Jada joined the YMCA in 2005 when she was four years old. She learned to play basketball through the Skill Builders program, participated in swim lessons and distinctly remembers attending the "Mom and Me" classes. Jada said, "The YMCA has been a part of my life since I can remember. I cherish all the memories I have made from the programs!"

In 2013, Jada's life changed. She began experiencing symptoms that included joint pain, shortness of breath, skin irritations and chest pains. After a year of experiencing symptoms, she was diagnosed with Rheumatic Heart Disease, a condition in which the heart valves have been permanently damaged making it harder for the heart to function normally.

Jada said, "I was instructed to stop all physical activity. I was no longer able to be active, play basketball or even carry a backpack."

Jada's strong perseverance had her back on the court at the YMCA in no time. She was determined to achieve her dreams. Jada said, "The YMCA has helped me believe in myself. It has given me the opportunity to continue playing the game I love with encouragement and motivation."

Through the support of the Geneva Lakes Family YMCA combined with her passion for the game, Jada has overcome her obstacle. Her mother Eleanor said, "The YMCA has helped Jada mentally and physically. It has been a blessing that she has made it this far. I am so thankful for the community support and for the Financial Assistance program."

The Geneva Lakes Family YMCA holds a special place in Jada's heart as she continues to grow and overcome her challenges. Her attitude of never giving up and working hard is a message she hopes to inspire in other athletes. Jada's love for the game continues as she currently plays on the Girls High School Varsity Basketball team. After High School, she hopes to play basketball on a collegiate team and study sports medicine. In her free time, she plans to volunteer at a children's hospital to inspire children who have Rheumatic Heart Disease.