

## 2023 PACTESP LIFE/WORK CHALLENGE AWARD RECIPIENT

### SECOND PLACE



**Jessica Ann Mullen** is a twelfth-grade student at York County School of Technology in the Culinary Arts program. She was born with Spina Bifida and has a specific learning disability in math. She has grown in the four years she has been at York Tech. Her ability to communicate her ideas and self-advocate has grown. She has a solid friend group and teacher/staff support. Jessica does not allow her disabilities to limit her opportunity for success. She completes her work to the best of her ability and excels at jobs in the culinary area that are not typically done by someone with her medical history.

She has been a consistently high-achieving student and has shown a great deal of resiliency. Interactions with school staff and other students have been respectful and productive. Jessica has always been able to clearly express her needs and share any obstacles that may influence her ability to accomplish her goals. She never makes excuses and shows up daily with a great attitude and disposition.

Jessica and her career and technical teachers modified the culinary curriculum to best suit her needs. The program focuses on her strengths and goals while improving weaker areas. She and the teacher assistant work closely to manage difficult situations presented in a commercial kitchen. Jessica's IEP team meets regularly to add supports and accommodations when her schedule changes.

Jessica has overcome her challenges and is able to complete culinary tasks that are required to work in a commercial kitchen. She has learned to adapt to certain skill requirements. With her knowledge of food and culinary skills, she was able to obtain a job at a local grocery store working in the produce section. York Tech opened job opportunities for Jessica that she would not have had she stayed at her home school district. She is now better prepared to transition into the real world after graduation.

Jessica has achieved the distinguished honor roll eight times and honor roll five times with a 3.0 GPA. Her teachers give rave reviews of her diligent work ethic and willingness to succeed in their classes. York Tech has been fortunate to have Jessica.

*Jessica Ann was nominated by Matthew Balsavage, Special Education Instructor/Department Chair, York County School of Technology.*



Pictured from left to right: *Michael McDermott, PACTESP President; Matthew Balsavage, Special Education Instructor/Department Chair; Jessica Ann Mullen, 2023 Life/Work Challenge Award Recipient; Joseph Terch IV, Director of Special Education; and Wendy Chalmers, Life/Work Challenge Award Chairperson*