



Jessica Charest, 18

Jessica Charest is a 2017 graduate of Burncoat High School. She has been attending the Boys & Girls Club of Worcester for more than 5 years. For most of her life, Jessica has moved from one short-term, temporary home to another, often bouncing from couch to couch in the houses of various family members and friends. When she turned 18, she was told she had to live on her own. Jessica reached out to the only other family she knew, her Club family. Club staff helped her reconnect with her dad, and she is staying with him for the time being. She is working with several community agencies to secure an apartment of her own this summer. She is looking forward to studying criminal justice at QCC in the fall.

Through all her ups and downs and uncertainty, Jessica maintained her GPA, completed Drivers Ed, and got a new, non-Club job after school. Although many times she felt alone and unwanted, Jessica managed to get to school every day, even completing her college and financial aid applications while not knowing if she would have a place to stay that night.

Though she lives on the other side of the city, Jessica takes two buses to get to and from the Boys & Girls Club. Even with her turbulent home life, Jessica always attended the Club with a smile on her face. In spite of everything, Jessica has not only overcome all her challenges, but also serves as a role model, to both Club kids and staff. During her time as a Club kid, Jessica was always willing to help, especially as a volunteer food server in our Kids Café. In fact, she was more dependable than some of our hired junior staff. We later hired her to work in Kids

Café, her first job. Jessica volunteers in our School Aged Child Care, helping the older kids with homework and leading craft projects. She is a role model to these kids as well, demonstrating the value of giving back, and of not letting obstacles define who you are. Jessica has assisted the Club in other ways, too. For a Club-funded project, she took photographs around the city, showing Worcester from a teen's perspective. The photos were so well-received that Nu Café allowed us to display them.

Jessica was very involved in her high school, volunteering for every community service event.