

SIUE student's medical history inspires pursuit of biology degree

October 2 2017 10:44 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - [Carly Wheeler, of Murphysboro](#), was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis as a baby, resulting in daily breathing treatments and multiple hospital visits throughout her life. Despite that diagnosis, the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville student has persevered.

After waiting on a transplant list for a total of three years, she underwent a double-lung transplant in December 2016.

“It’s progressive. There’s no cure,” Wheeler explained of cystic fibrosis. “I always knew what was happening, but I didn’t know why it was happening.”

To answer the question of ‘why,’ Wheeler is using her disease as motivation to study genetics and cell biology. She hopes to someday make a difference in the lives of others by contributing to medical discoveries and clinical advances.

“My passion for science started in my high school biology class,” she said. “We would learn about recessive genes, and cystic fibrosis always came up. I took an interest in what was going on biologically.”

“There’s just so much unknown with genetics, so there’s so much room for discovery,” she continued. “I would love to help impact someone’s life by making some sort of medical advancement.”

Her journey to SIUE hasn’t been easy, but she’s excited to be in the biological sciences program and eager to gain new knowledge and pursue her dreams.

“I would tell people facing any obstacle to do what you want to do, and finish what you start,” said the 24-year-old. “It doesn’t matter how long it takes. It’s making progress, and accomplishing your goal that matters.”

[Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#) provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 14,000.