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[摘要] Dec. 8, 2006. EAST LANSING, Mich. — The walk across the stage to receive a diploma marks both the beginning of new adventures and the end of an incredible journey for Michigan State University senior Britney Hoszkiw.
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Dec. 8, 2006. EAST LANSING, Mich. —
The walk across the stage to receive a diploma marks both the beginning of new adventures and the end of an incredible journey for Michigan State University senior Britney Hoszkiw. She will graduate three semesters later than expected, but she feels that a life-changing illness has given her a new perspective on life.
Hoszkiw doesn't talk with a sense of regret about contracting bacterial meningitis complicated by meningococcal septicemia (which results in a loss of oxygen supply to multiple organs including the kidneys, peripheral muscles and skin), a two-week coma, a month in intensive care, blood clots in her legs, a pulmonary embolism, nerve damage to her hands and feet, kidney failure, dialysis treatments, chronic pain, rehabilitation and living with a kidney donated by her father but she wishes she had been able to give more to MSU.
A 2001 graduate of Northwest High School, Hoszkiw spent a year at Jackson Community College before enrolling at MSU in the fall of 2002. She will graduate Dec. 9 from MSU with a degree in communications and a specialization in public relations.
Hoszkiw contracted her illness shortly after coming to the university.
"When I came down with my illness, I was thinking "why me, what did I do wrong in my short life to deserve this?" Hoszkiw said. "I had to re-learn to walk, write and even re-learn the alphabet. It was hard to do the daily tasks, like brushing my teeth. There was more to think about than school. When you get sick like this, you don't think about graduation."
"My MSU professors were incredibly understanding and helpful, and I never did ask for many special considerations," she said. "I was just trying to be normal. Every small accomplishment was a benchmark, and I was not going to let this illness defeat me. Also, the Food Network and my family kept me sane."
Her parents, Steve and Kathy Hoszkiw, and her doctor, Raphael Javier, a nephrologist with the Mid-Michigan Kidney Specialists in Lansing, knew that she would have a long recovery period, but that for her mental health she needed to return to school as soon as possible.
She credits her family and doctors with helping her make that a reality, and after seven months of rest and rehabilitation, returned to school part time and continued her rehabilitation regimen.
A dancer, Hoszkiw lost chunks of her muscle tissue, but with rehabilitation, has returned to dancing.
"I love all types of dancing, but ballet was always what I enjoyed most. It was unreal to me how quickly I could go from being on stage to the handicap row," she said. "I'm still far from the dancer I was. It's more of a hobby, and when I stop it will be because I choose to."
"I feel better than I have in years; I've never had so much energy and such a positive perspective," Hoszkiw said. "Because of this illness, I view things differently and experience life in many new ways. I enjoy school and my life with family and friends."
She also plans on enjoying her new career as executive director of the Downtown Development Association and program manager for the Michigan Main Street Program in Iron Mountain. She will be working on the development and historic preservation of the downtown Iron Mountain area through the program.
Will she dance across the stage at commencement?
"You probably won't catch me dancing, but I will be a very happy girl," she said. "I know it took a long time, and it was a round about way to get here, but I'll be happy to say I did it. And luckily, it's something I'll only have to do once."

