



Deshae Lott Ministries Inc

# Meet the Recipients of the 2017 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Scholarships

## Heidi Martin-Coleman Recipient of a \$2500 Scholarship



For years, Heidi Martin-Coleman of Easthampton, Massachusetts was a developmental nurse educator, using her diverse degrees in Nursing and Music Education to serve infants and children with developmental delays, and helping their families learn skills to aid in their development.

All of this began to change when her previous diagnosis of “probable MS” was confirmed instead to be maternally-inherited Mitochondrial Myopathy. Sadly, the youngest of her three children, Heather Grace, had the worst prognosis, and developed Leigh’s Disease and died before her third birthday. Heidi’s own health declined rapidly, as she lost all her hearing, a significant portion of her vision, and most of her mobility. She experienced multiple organ failures, could no longer

eat or breathe on her own, and ultimately went into home hospice care, fully expecting to die surrounded by her loving family. What happened instead astounded both Heidi and her doctors. She regained her strength, and eventually returned to school majoring in Deaf Studies.

With the help of her service dog, Mercury (shown with her in the picture), and a Personal Care Assistant, she teaches Adult Basic Education to people who have faced obstacles to learning, whether because of disability, poverty, or inadequate social or educational support.

Heidi is pursuing a master’s degree in higher education from Capella University. Her goal is to create a curriculum for adults with disabilities who are working toward a high school equivalency certificate, with the aim of moving them into living wage employment and independent living.

Her determination to fight her way back from a terminal diagnosis and meet the many challenges of her life, with the ultimate goal of finding new and creative ways to help others meet their own challenges, makes Heidi Martin-Coleman the ideal candidate for our scholarship.

## Philip Soen

### Recipient of a \$1000 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Scholarship

Philip Soen, a three-time recipient of our scholarship, is in his third year of doctoral studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, pursuing his Ph.D. in New Testament Studies. Philip has Charcot Marie Tooth Disease, and needs assistance with all of the daily life skills listed on our application except for breathing, hearing, seeing, and communicating. He feels that in addition to pursuing his professional goals, he is in a position to help and inspire people who “feel powerless to act in the face of ordinary obstacles,” and to help them more fully realize their own power and strength. He is shown here with his wife, Emily, and their children. We are honored to be a part of Philip’s journey



## Katherine Landis

### Recipient of a \$1500 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Scholarship

Katherine Landis of Staten Island, New York, is currently pursuing her Master of Social Work from Columbia University School of Social Work, thus fulfilling a lifetime’s desire to help children in need, and particularly those in foster care. Growing up in a household where she and her older sister both had neuromuscular diseases (her diagnosis is Spinal Muscular Atrophy, Type II), she became accustomed to frequent hospital stays, learning how to interact with staff and ask the right questions about her condition. At the age of 13, she helped a close friend in a terrible family situation stop self-abusive cutting behavior.

While an undergraduate student at NYU, where she obtained her Bachelor of Social Work, she did her field work as a CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocate), at times carrying

a caseload of up to seven children in addition to her studies.

Katherine says, “Children are my passion; nothing makes me happier than spending time with kids. Social justice is my driving force; nothing gets me more motivated than speaking up for the unheard. Clinical social work with children and families is my avocation.”

