

# The Warrior

PROFILE BY  
*Abigail Hayman, Canton*

Although it's cold and rainy on the Monday that we meet, Cherokee County artist **Madison Taylor** is a ray of sunshine. Madison is celebrated in her community of Woodstock as an inspiration and a guiding light to others.

Madison's parents, Lori and Jeff, note she had an artistic childhood, often drawing clothes for her dolls and otherwise expressing her creativity. As a student at Etowah High School, Madison's creative passion led her to a bake shop. "I worked as a lead decorator for Great American Cookie," she says. "Frosting and painting have always been my jam." After high school, Madison attended Kennesaw State University.



MADISON  
TAYLOR

Everything changed for Madison on August 9, 2019, when a diving accident injured her spinal cord and rendered her paralyzed. That November she withdrew from college to focus on recovery. "I had to find things to help me with my fine motor skills and creativity. I've heard of people who paint with their feet because they lost their hands," Madison says. "Just because you are going through something challenging or have a limitation doesn't mean you just give up. You need to harness that power or mindset at some point and do it for you."

## Fresh Perspective

Following her injury Madison met artist Debbie Veith, who became her mentor. Nicole Lampl, curator for The Reeves House, notes, "Debbie worked with Madison to figure out how best to accommodate the limited use of her hands by figuring out a way to attach paintbrushes onto her wrists." Madison appreciates Debbie's guidance in her early art journey. Through painting classes and occupational therapy, Madison learned that art was a peaceful process and didn't have to be perfect.

In October 2022 Madison's work was featured in an exhibit at The Reeves House that welcomed more than one hundred attendees at its opening. "My community is my source of empowerment as a female artist," Madison says. "The outcome from everyone who showed up at my art show was incredible."

## Woman Warrior

She says of her painting, *Woman Warrior*, "You go through hardships, and armor forms around you. By controlling your mindset, positivity radiates from you. It's more powerful than any of the challenges in your life."

Madison also relates to the works of her favorite artist, Pablo Picasso. "The evolution of Picasso's face paintings resonates with how I've seen myself over the years. I used to think that I was just a person in a wheelchair. Now I've got new wheels and better parking," Madison jokes. "There are people with a golden attitude who are going through a terrible situation, but some people have it all and aren't grateful for anything," Madison says.

Her father, Jeff Johnson, finds himself inspired by his daughter and her outlook on life. "She puts her heart and emotions on a canvas," he says.

## Making a Difference

Madison plans to attend fashion school to make a difference for individuals with disabilities. "People like me, in wheelchairs, have to find functional and comfortable clothes. You have to have something that works on your body so you can sit, but also outfits you can dress up in. I believe I could make a difference there. I've always been fashion-forward, and I think that would be awesome. I could help people from that perspective," she says. "I hope people see that I have a great attitude. Maybe they can change the way they live their life." Madison adds with a smile. Madison resides in downtown Woodstock with her support dog, Brody.