

# Finding her own way

## Blind Baylor student doesn't let impairment slow her college career

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Lee, a 22 year old junior at Baylor university, has been blind since birth.

What some people would consider an insurmountable hurdle is, for Lee, no more than an extra annoyance.

"It's just a little more difficult learning things that are visual when you can't see" Lee said. "But I've always been determined to accomplish whatever goals are set for myself."

Whether interning at a local TV station, playing in Baylor's Golden Wave Marching Band, or just getting up around campus, Lee insists on doing thing on her own and on her own terms.

Her mother Pat, a secretary at West Middle School, said Stephanie has had that attitude from day one. She wasn't the type to sit in a corner alone. She was always ready to go. Even early on, she knew there was more than crawling, and that's why she didn't crawl for very long."

Her mother said her daughter learned to walk at a young age, tracing her hand along the wall as she maneuvered through the house.

"When she was born, I thought, 'What I am going to do?'" Pat Lee said. "I mean, I'd never been around a blind person. At that point, I didn't know what else to do but treat her like her older sister, Leslie. And that's what I did."

Pat said Stephanie received early school assistance from Region 12's Visual Impairment Special Education Center.

"But for Stephanie, being the type of child she was, there was no option but to mainstream her," Pat said. "So West Independent School District hired a Braille transcriptionist, and she just excelled."

Her daughter, who graduated from West in 2006, waves off these memories with a dismissive laugh.

Lee is so devoted to this idea, she transferred colleges, moving from Texas A&M University to Baylor this summer.

"Texas A&M was too big," she said. "Baylor was smaller, I could get around by myself easier, and plus, A&M didn't have the degree plan that I wanted."

Lee, a public relations major with a corporate commu-

nications minor, said she was drawn to Baylor for its small size and close-knit community.

"I like being able to know the people in my classes and my professors," she said. "It's a blessing to be in a place where I'm known for my name and not just for my university identification number."

### Keeping in step

A former snare drummer for West High School's marching band, Lee says that music is, and always has been, an important part of her life. That passion brought her straight to the Golden Wave Marching Band.

"Growing up, one of my dreams was to be in the band," she said. "But at A&M, you have to be in the Corps, and that just wasn't going to happen. So when I came to Baylor, I tried out for the Golden Wave band and made it. We knew that we were going to have to make some modifications when I started, but I love it. I've made some of my best friends that I'll probably keep for life in the band."

Colin McKenzie, assistant director of bands at Baylor, has high praise for Lee.

"She's incredible," McKenzie said. "She doesn't want to be treated any differently from any of the other band members. So we haven't changed our expectations for her performance compared to the other band members."

After Lee graduates in December 2009, she said she hopes to move to Dallas to work for CBS Radio.

"I just like interacting with people and networking," she said. "I want to be on the side of media that helps people." Stephanie said that whatever she does, she'll apply the same can-do attitude she's carried since she learned how to walk.

"I've never wanted somebody to think, 'Oh you can't do this. You can't do this because you can't see,'" she said. "I've never wanted that."

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