

**Full Name**

*Madison Ward*

**Your Age**

*12*

**Competition City you are attending**

*Davenport, IA*

**Name of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)**

*Chris and Jillian Ward*

**Name of Your Dance Studio**

*Almost Famous Dance Studio*

**Your Essay**

*Hi, I am Madison Ward, I am 12 years old, I dance for Almost Famous Dance Studio in Monticello, IA. I love my mom and dad a lot they support me with everything I do, I love to dance, and they love me to dance because It is like a therapy to me and I dance wherever I go, I have music in my room all the time and they know I love to dance my little heart out.*

*To start, I would like to talk about my dad, my dad is very special to me and to my world. My dad was born with a bicuspid aortic valve, but he didn't know about that until he was 30 which was four and a half years ago, and it was on mine and my twin, Kennedy's 8th birthday, (I also have a little sister Morgan and she is 8, and she annoys me all the time, but I still love her). My dad got really sick and my mom took him to the hospital, I was told he had an aortic aneurysm and his aorta dissected, I had no idea what that meant. Everything was happening very fast and I really didn't know what was going on... My dad's first open heart surgery was 9 hours long and was the day after my birthday, everything was really scary, and I didn't know if he was going to live. He had a mechanical valve put in to replace his valve they had to crack his chest open to do this and they also had a straw like thing put in his chest and some special tape to fix his aorta. As soon as all that happened my mom took my sisters and I to a cardiologist to get our hearts checked, just to be*

sure. Only one of us had the bicuspid aortic valve and it was me. I have many restrictions as I grow and get older one of them is I can't lift over my weight, I used to be a gymnast, but the doctors thought I shouldn't do that anymore I decided I wanted to stay active, so I decided to dance. My mom says dance is the best thing for me she wants me to stay active and healthy, so I don't need to have heart surgery. One year later my dad had to have open heart surgery again so that they could correct all the things that they couldn't fix the first time since everything was happening so fast and he wasn't doing well during the first surgery, we didn't know if he was going to make it, but he did! He always supports me and cheers Cmon MADHOUSE!! At the top of his lungs every time I dance. My daddy hates the makeup and the costumes, he thinks they are way to grown up for me, but he still lets me wear them because Mom says it's fine! My dad also complains a lot about how much dance costs, but he works hard, and I am still dancing because of that, thank you daddy. My dad and I are alike in many ways.

Next, my mom is my biggest fan I feel like I love when she is there to support me and giggle with me about my little mishaps in the hotel room, when I do makeup I GIGGLE all the time so I mess up a lot and so she has to do it for me. I love when my mom is always pushing me to do stuff because I am a struggle. I love my mom to the moon and back even though she makes me mad all the time, I am thankful for her! She also works extra and very hard for me so that I can dance, she is a nurse and works a lot of extra hours to help pay for things. My daddy complains about how much it costs but my mom always says how it is the best thing for me and my health and no matter what I will dance if that is what makes me happy. She always says no matter how much it costs I will do whatever I can so that you can do what you love.

Finally, dance is one of the most important things to me, I dance wherever I go, dance means the world to me. If my cardiologist said I couldn't dance I would cry but thank goodness, he says I can which I love that. I love to freestyle because I can let loose and feel the beat. Dance is so fun I love my parents so much for letting me do it, and yes times get hard, but I get through it!! Everybody is happy at the end of the day I always say that. But this tribute is to my wonderful parents, so thank you and I love you Mom and Dad.