

## **Aim To Inspire: "A Prom for Me"**

"Sight is what your eyes sees, but vision is what your heart produces." Vision is exactly what Aim To Inspire's Founder, Angela Hines, has to lead with in her programs and activities for the special needs community. So often overlooked in plain sight, Angela has both the heart and grace to not only "see" them, but to also advocate that they are seen as thriving and living full lives successfully. Armed with over 30 years in the education field, Angela brings all of it into her current role as an Employment Supports Specialist of Kent Immediate School District and her life's passion to empower special needs youth and individuals to gain life mastery skills to become valued, contributing members of their families and communities.

"They want to enjoy life just as much as we do - to the best of their ability - and I'm thankful that God has entrusted and allowed me to help provide opportunities for them to be able to do it," shared Angela. Although Aim To Inspire also provides real life skills and workforce development programs for the youth, it is the "A Prom For Me" formal event that is the highlight of their school year. "A Prom For Me" is an elegant evening where members of the special needs community (young and the older, but younger at heart) are dressed to the nines in dressy dresses, tuxedos, and everything in-between. However, it all begins with the actual students coming together to plan the event down to the smallest of details. From the selection of the music and DJ to the planning of the menu that Hines and her team loving prepares that is guaranteed to include the all-time crowd-favorite, Chick-Fil-A, the entire night is tailored-made for them. Moving beyond conventional protocols, these special guests are free to eat whatever they want, dance, take photos, sing, and socialize whenever they want to accommodate everyone's needs and levels of comfort.

"They excitedly count down the days to the big night, while their parents also join in the excitement in seeing their children so engaged and involved. I'm also blessed and impacted throughout the whole process of the experience myself for the better every year" Hines exclaimed. This event and other Aim To Inspire programs have also woven

together a wonderful close-knit community amongst the students and their families that did not exist before. Play and lunch dates have been so instrumental in building friendships for the youth and adults alike for camaraderie and support. Hines graciously expressed her gratitude for the City's Neighborhood Match Fund that helped to make this year's Prom a smashing success. "It is one thing to have my community to believe in me, but also to believe in our vision to see these special persons empowered to be and thrive in their best lives."