

## Brookhaven resident shines in Sandy Springs kitchen

by [Margot Carvallo](#) | December 11, 2015



Rachel Weigle, in wheelchair, is shown with her students at a class she teaches at the Young Chefs Academy in Sandy Springs. (Special Photo)

Rachel Weigle is a 19-year-old cooking teacher who is not letting cerebral palsy slow her down.

She has been attending and working at the Young Chefs Academy in Sandy Springs for five years, and now Weigle not only teaches a new generation of young chefs but also creates and reinvents recipes on her own.

“Cerebral palsy causes me to be in a wheelchair and also have learning and processing difficulties. Cooking takes me to a different place and allows me to not focus on it,” she said.

As an addition to the academy’s school body, academy owner Kia Shavonne said, “It has been such a pleasure watching her grow and mature. My experience with her for me validates why I am a teacher.”

Weigle currently is studying early childcare education at Warren Technical School in DeKalb County.

“My goal is to work with [the] Young Chefs Academy KinderCooks program,” she said. “I love being around children, so combining cooking and children at Young Chefs Academy would be perfect.”

Weigle said teaching has given confidence and self-esteem to allow her to grow as a person and believe in the future ahead.

She has grown from young teenager to young adult in the academy’s Chef Club membership program, said Shavonne, by taking weekly cooking classes in which she has gained culinary knowledge, people skills and comfort in the kitchen.

“Cooking makes reading and math fun. It allows me to take my time and enjoy the process and be able to do what others can do,” said Weigle.

She is defined, Shavonne said, as witty and with a sarcastic sense of humor that keeps all the other chefs laughing during class.

Once she realized her passion for cooking, “It was wonderful finding a place where she fit in and her disability did not have to define her,” said Weigle’s mother, Dawn Weigle. “She has fine and gross motor issues but Chef Kia and the staff got her to have the confidence to try to work past her challenges.

“Who would have ever thought she would be cutting up vegetables and looking up new recipes on the Internet?”

Her challenge as a teacher of young students, her mother said, is one that anyone who has kids or teaches children can relate to how to not let them wear you out.

Rachel Weigle is not only committed to her students but also wants to help in the community.

This summer she came up with the idea of cooking 1,000 dog treats and donated them to different shelters around the city.