

Sondra has some big dreams ahead of her.

But she's already started the journey...

Sondra Marnin—Atlantic Iowa

Sondra is a lifelong dog lover. Her first dog, a Collie named King, arrived home as a puppy when Sondra arrived as a newborn. She's had dogs in her life ever since. Sondra has an intellectual disability combined with some neurological challenges but she hasn't let that stand in her way.

Sondra's mother, Dawn, shared a love of baking with Sondra that continues to this day. Sondra also loved baking in 4-H and when she was about eleven years old, she decided she would like to bake for dogs, something healthy and delicious. She researched on her own and found some recipes to get her started. She and her mom bought some canine themed cookie cutters and Sondra was off chasing her dream of a bakery for dogs, a business she officially started about five years ago. She calls it the Barkery.

After high school, Sondra attended Iowa Lakes Community College's SAVE Program for special needs students. (SAVE is a secondary transitional preparatory program for students on a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) located at the Emmetsburg Campus.) Because of her love of baking, she thought she would like to work in Hotel Management and she ultimately got her Associates Degree in that field. However, when she returned to Atlantic after college, she tried several different jobs and was unsuccessful as she had no supports on the job. Sondra was disheartened.

Her family referred her to CASS Incorporated in 2014 and with Sondra's drive, her family's active involvement and CASS's customized supports, Sondra is now doing quite well. She lives in her own home and through the Employment Discovery process (where we learned that Sondra likes to read) she landed a job at the public library in Atlantic. She says she likes this job better than what she went to school for. She really enjoys helping people find what they need and she works in most jobs throughout the library, including helping with After School programs. Sondra does need ongoing supports in her life, from her family and from CASS Incorporated, her service provider, but they are minimal and specific to her needs and desires. With this little bit of help, she is having great success.



Sondra dreams of one day having a storefront Barkery bakery, with a doggie party room, sample treats, and a social place for dogs to greet and gather. She has a detailed vision of what she wants it to look like. As she's working toward that goal, she is developing a loyal following for her Barkery dog treats. She and her dog Milo can be seen at *Produce in the Park*, in Atlantic's City Park during the summer, promoting her newest concoctions and selling her ever popular SnickerPoodles and Peanut Butter Puppy Poppers to happy dogs and grateful dog lovers.