Brittany Dejean was a mover and a shaker from way back. Her father made sure of that because he loved to move around the dance floor, and he passed on his enthusiasm to his family.

“The reason I love to dance so much is because of my Dad,” Brittany says. “Growing up, he would play bands like Queen, and we’d dance all over the house.”

But that happy family tradition ended tragically and irrevocably when Brittany was just 12 years old. In one shattering moment, her father’s car was broadsided as he drove home with Brittany’s brother beside him.

Her brother was killed instantly; her father was rushed to the hospital in critical condition, where doctors had more devastating news. Brittany’s dad had lost the use of his legs and fingers. He became a quadriplegic, destined to use a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

“That moment was one of the most difficult things my family went through,” recalls Brittany. “I found out about my brother first, and then I really wanted my Dad to survive. I was just happy to take my Dad in the form I was going to get him in.”

But for her father, the reality was more difficult to accept. His initial reaction was of shock and despair.

“The first time you look at your feet and you can’t move them, you’re going to freak out,” he says.

But as the reality sank in, his thoughts turned to his little girl.

“I used to dance quite a bit. And I do remember thinking, I’ll never dance at her wedding.”

The accident left an invisible imprint on Brittany that would become evident in college. While studying in China, she began exploring the lives of people with disabilities. One man she met there, who had far more body movement than her father, told her he was doomed to spend the rest of his life in bed.
“I saw that people with disabilities faced similar challenges worldwide. That made me realize how lucky we had been to have the resources we had for my Dad.”

Brittany calls it her “moment of obligation.”

“Once I realized that what we had wasn’t the norm, I knew that I needed to do something to make sure everyone has the support and resources to adapt and thrive with a disability. People with disabilities are humans with unique potential, and everyone deserves a chance to thrive.”

In 2014, Brittany founded AbleThrive.

According to The World Bank, one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability. Between 110 million and 190 million people experience significant disabilities. And while there are millions of articles, videos, and resources online about how to live well with a disability, there are barriers to accessing this potentially life-changing information.

AbleThrive works to break down those barriers with a one-stop online platform featuring curated resources for people living with disabilities and their families.

Brittany Dejean is Founder and CEO of the non-profit AbleThrive, committed to fostering inclusion in society for people with disabilities and offering them one-stop, curated resources online. A 2008 Harvard University graduate, Brittany has worked with disability communities in five countries.

#ThriveWorldwide meet up in Manila, Philippines with an organization called Virtualahan

Brittany is making an impact across the U.S.