



AUGUST 9 - 15, 2010
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

**She is clothed with strength and
dignity, and she laughs without fear
of the future. When she speaks her
words are wise, and she gives
instruction with kindness.**

Proverbs 31:25-26





JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

JOHN D. CHERRY, JR.
LT. GOVERNOR

August 9, 2010

Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc.
1959 Timber Ridge Road
Lincoln, NE 68522

Dear Friends:

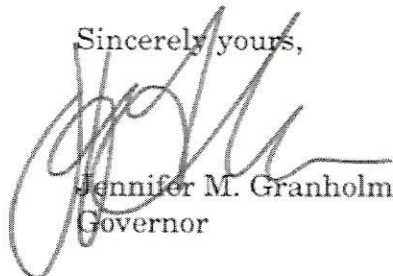
It is my pleasure to welcome you to Michigan for the 2011 Ms. Wheelchair America pageant hosted by Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc.

I applaud the talented young women competing for the title, and hold great admiration for their courage and commitment to tackling the challenges in their lives head on. I especially want to thank Ms. Wheelchair America, Inc. for its advocacy on behalf of the more than 52 million Americans living with disabilities. Your work is helping to change lives and attitudes.

While you are in Grand Rapids, I encourage you to explore some of the area's great attractions, including Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, John Ball Zoo, the Public Museum, the Children's Museum, and the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, to name a few. And if you have some extra time, you may want to explore other areas of our state – including Michigan's beautiful Upper Peninsula. There is so much to see and do here. I am confident you will find Michigan inviting and our hospitality warm.

Again, welcome to the Ms. Wheelchair America pageant. Please accept my heartfelt best wishes for an exciting and inspirational pageant.

Sincerely yours,



Jennifer M. Granholm
Governor

MWA President Welcomes You!!



Dear Friends,

Over the last six years of my involvement with the Ms. Wheelchair America Program, I have frequently thought of Gandhi's renowned quote, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." It is my belief that our organization echoes this call to action in this week's empowering event. Honoring women for their accomplishments, advocacy, and example redefines the concept of a pageant. Instead of a stage filled with participants who exemplify society's idea of physical perfection, our contestants impart a progressive notion that real beauty is not measured by the number of heads you turn, but by the number of hearts you touch.

This event would never be possible without the tireless efforts of the state coordinators and volunteers encompassing all of the Ms. Wheelchair programs across our nation, the support of our generous sponsors, and the participation of the inspiring women who serve as state titleholders. Most importantly it is you, as a spectator, that I wish to thank for being a part of this pageant. Your presence is a vehicle to share our vision. When you return to work or enjoy a meal with friends, convey to them the stories you will hear about overcoming obstacles, eliminating stereotypes, and breaking down barriers. This retelling is a pivotal step in changing the conceptions that the public has about the abilities of those with disabilities.

Please join me in celebrating these outstanding women who are proudly representing all Americans with disabilities.

Yours Sincerely,

Angela Wrigglesworth

President

Welcome to Michigan!!



August 9, 2010

Dear Titleholders,

I am contagious, and I hope you will be too! The enthusiasm you will experience during the Ms. Wheelchair America 2011 pageant should impact you in a mighty way! You will meet amazing people. You will hear impressive and inspiring stories. You will learn things about yourself and others. You will gain knowledge that will empower you. You will understand the power within each of you. You will leave Michigan different, and you will believe different is "Great!"

I have been able to take three of my favorite things and bring them together. First, there is Grand Rapids, my hometown, the best place to grow up. I'm proud of "My Giant Little Town" and it is a pleasure to share it with you! Secondly, Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, my rehab hospital. Over 23 years ago, I entered "scared", but left understanding I had a future. They truly are "Restoring Hope and Freedom" and giving patients a life that is "to be continued..." It is an extreme pleasure to introduce them! Third, the Ms. Wheelchair America program is my passion. I have seen this program change the lives of women with disabilities. It took me on an emotional journey, but left me empowered. It is more than a program; it is a sisterhood driven to help you become an advocate for yourself and each other. You will feel a sense of achievement and know that you are impacting the world. You will understand that this is an opportunity for you to leave a legacy. So, make me proud and let Grand Rapids and Mary Free Bed understand why I believe in you and all of the Ms. Wheelchair America family!

Hosting the Ms. Wheelchair America 2011 pageant has been a challenge I was not planning on, but God had different plans. I attend Frontline Bible Church of Byron Center, where we are encourage to "Go out and make a lasting impact for Jesus Christ". I want you to know that is the only reason I "rolled" out in Faith and accepted the challenge. This is God's doing, not mine. So don't "Thank me", but God! I know I will continue to be amazed, because He took the ordinary out of my life and moved me to Extraordinary!

I am honored to consider each one of you, a friend!

God Bless!

Shelly Loose

History

In 1972 Dr. Philip K. Wood of Columbus, Ohio had devoted his career to treating and rehabilitating persons with functional impairments. During his practice, he became aware of the talents, capabilities, determination and courage of persons with disabilities. As a result, he established Ms. Wheelchair America as a forum for promoting the achievements and accomplishments of women who utilize wheelchairs for mobility, as well as the needs of all persons with mobility challenges.

The mission of Ms. Wheelchair America is to provide an opportunity for women of achievement to successfully educate about and advocate for the more than 54 million Americans living with disabilities. The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is in no way a traditional beauty contest.

Purpose and Goals

Each year the Ms. Wheelchair America Program holds a competition to select the most accomplished, articulate spokeswoman for people with disabilities. The titleholder must be able to communicate and educate the public, business community, and lawmakers regarding the dignity, productiveness and basic value of people with disabilities. Ms. Wheelchair America continues to eliminate the architectural and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disabilities from assuming their rightful place in society.

Ms. Wheelchair America has numerous duties. During her reign she has the opportunity to travel, visit advocacy groups, make public appearances and conduct interviews. Ms. Wheelchair America promotes her chosen platform in a variety of settings. She serves as a positive role model for the next generation of Americans with disabilities inspiring them to leave their own legacy. Her commitment and personal example serves to further the mission of Ms. Wheelchair America.

The pageant is made up of a multitude of activities. This allows the judging panel time with the state titleholders, while enabling the competitors an opportunity share with each other and develop friendships. They become stronger advocates throughout the week because of the variety of the interesting workshops that strengthen them. They develop skills that heighten awareness on issues within the community, and open a dialogue between the women about their thoughts, ideas, values and experiences.

The Ms. Wheelchair America 501(c)3 non-profit is staffed and coordinated totally by volunteers from many different community organizations, businesses, private citizens, and previous titleholders. It is through the monetary and in-kind support of the many sponsors that the national titleholder is able to fulfill her duties throughout the year and travel across the country with her message of empowerment for the people with disabilities. The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is actively seeking sponsors and volunteers and would appreciate any support that is offered.

Ms. Wheelchair America 2010

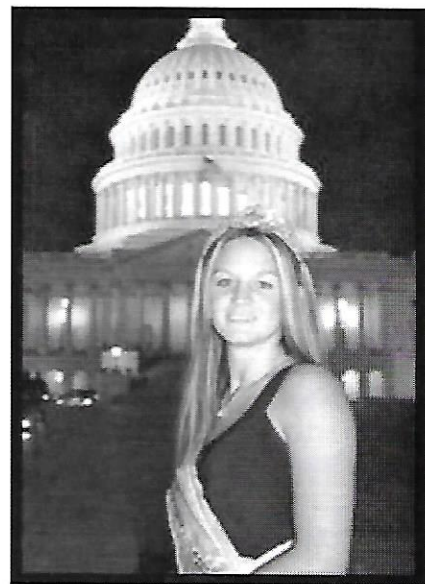
Erika Bogan

On January 20, 2002, I was injured in a motor vehicle accident. After being in a coma for 2 ½ months, I awoke to learn that my life as I had known it for 21 years had been changed forever. The doctor's told me that I would never walk again, and that I would be "confined" to a wheelchair for the rest of my life. They had no idea, and neither did I or my family, that I was going to be where I am now in life. I have proven to all of them, and myself, that anything is possible, as well as give them a reason to redefine the definition of "confined".

The first couple of years after my injury, I was not introduced to other people in wheelchairs, especially other women in wheelchairs. The only thing that kept me getting out of bed from day to day was my children. Inside, I felt as if I had no purpose, but I knew that everything happens for a reason, and that if nothing else I had to show my three little girls that they can be strong, independent, and motivated women; no matter what obstacles they faced in life's journey. I knew that I had to find a way to make my negative situation a positive one, and help not only my children believe that anything was possible, but also millions of other people that found themselves in the same situation that I was facing. I have never been one to give up, or stop living, and I was not going to stop now; that's how I roll!

I started networking on the internet, building relationships with other woman, just like me that were living with disabilities and realized a whole community existed that I never knew about. This community showed me that I could still surf, ride a bicycle, dance and play sports. They did not judge people's outward appearance or disabilities, but instead they focused and motivated each other to bring out their abilities; showing the world that life rolls on. That is when I found out about the Ms. Wheelchair America Organization and their mission to educate the public about disability issues, and promote awareness. I figured this would be a great way to meet even more women like myself, and share my story with people across the nation, all with hopes of making a lasting impression of determination and motivation to others. Little did I know that I was embarking on one of the greatest adventures of my life.

Now, a year later, I can't believe how fast time has gone by, and what an amazing year it has been! When this journey all began for me in April of 2009, when I was crowned Ms. Wheelchair North Carolina, I never expected what the future held for me. I had no idea that I was going to meet some of the strongest, accomplished, and vivacious women that I have ever met, who were also in wheelchairs from day to day. My week at the national competition in Rapid City, South Dakota was, by far, my most cherished memory of my year as Ms. Wheelchair America 2010. Throughout the week prior to being crowned, I was so humbled and touched by the other girls that were participating in the competition with me. We had all overcome so many obstacles to get to that point in our lives and each of us brought a unique and inspiring story of persistence and determination. I did not expect to leave that competition with a crown, but rather with new friendships that would last a lifetime, and a sense of humbleness for where I had come to at that point in my life.



After I was crowned Ms. Wheelchair America 2010, I definitely realized that with my title, I was going to represent all of those women plus the millions of others across the United States. I had to inspire them and set an example about accomplishing their goals and reaching their dreams, no matter how they may "roll" through life.

I have had many, many adventures along the way this last year. Here are a few highlights. There have been way too many to write.



In November I traveled to Washington D.C., to speak on behalf of the National Disability Institute and the IRS for the Real Economic Impact Tour kick-off at the National Press Club. It was definitely for a purpose that I hold very close to my heart. The REI Tour promotes financial means and stability for people living with disabilities through education and vocational opportunities.



On New Year's Day, I was honored to participate in the Tournament of the Roses Parade in Pasadena, California, along with Alyson Roth. (Ms. Wheelchair California 2009 and my second runner-up) We rode on the Kiwanis International Foundation float in this famous parade.

At the end of January, I traveled back to Rapid City, SD to downhill snow ski with the Black Hills Annual Ski for Light Organization, where I was able to visit with old friends and make many new ones, as well as experience adaptive snow skiing for the first time!

Another one of my favorite highlights was attending the Abilities Expos in October 2009, April 2010, and May 2010, in Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Edison, NJ. I was able to meet many people with disabilities and many companies within the disability industry.

Thank you to my sponsors over the past year, including Colours Wheelchair, Lega Wear, the National Disability Institute, 54 Freedom, NCAMES, VGM, and the many supporters who have donated toward my travel needs. And finally, my daughters and my family for standing behind me, as I reached for the stars.

It wasn't until I had a moment to catch my breath at the end of my year, that I realized that I finally reached my biggest dream. That dream was to touch the lives of many people living with disabilities with my story, and to show them that there is always a road ahead no matter what limitations they were facing, anything is possible. I made many friends and left an impression on so many by advocating for, not only myself, but for the disability community at large. I know that this year's title holder, as well as the Ms. Wheelchair America Organization will continue to thrive and make a difference in lives of many. To all who are competing this year, and in future years, I want to say that everyone of you are winners. It does not take a crown and sash to make a difference. It only takes going out into the world and showing that we are not "Dis"abled, but rather "Differently" abled. We are actually very able, just in a different way. It takes many voices, forming a community, to spread our messages and break the stigmas that exist about people who are living with disabilities, and that is the community that we are all building within the disability industry by representing our states and competing for the national title. It is not this week, and whether or not you win, that makes the difference, but rather the fact that you have overcome so many obstacles to get to this week in your life. You are all winners! Ms. Wheelchair America 2011, enjoy the adventure that you have just embarked upon!

Contestants

MS WHEELCHAIR ALABAMA

Joanne Pearson

Joanne lives in Huntsville, Alabama and is actively working to open a non-profit organization called The Abilities Council which will have a school, daycare and resource referral department for at-risk students and student with special needs. She is currently attending Athens State University pursuing a BS in Elementary Education. Joanne enjoys working on fundraising activities for her community. Joanne has been in her chair since February 2006.

Joanne describes herself as genuine, kind, driven and motivated.



MS WHEELCHAIR ARKANSAS

Judy Little

Judy lives in Cave City, Arkansas and is retired from the U.S. Post Office as a rural carrier. She is the recipient of the Extra-Ordinary Leadership Award, given in honor of the late Winthrop Rockefeller and she desires to help those in need when possible. Judy enjoys swimming, fishing, camping, traveling, and time with her 6 grandchildren as well as the rest of her family. She is a para-1 and has used a wheelchair since her automobile accident 10 years ago.

Judy describes herself as positive, compassionate, and friendly.



MS WHEELCHAIR CALIFORNIA

Jennifer Kumiyama

Jennifer lives in Long Beach, California and is a singer/actress in Disney's "Aladdin: A Musical Spectacular" at Disney's California Adventure Theme Park and the Chief Editor of Disabled Guides for Not Another Guide. She enjoys volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, Free Wheelchair Mission & the Life Rolls On. Jennifer enjoys surfing, skiing, singing, and inspiring others with disabilities. She has Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita (AMC) since birth & has used a power wheelchair all her life. Jennifer describes herself as outgoing, balanced, and optimistic.



MS WHEELCHAIR COLORADO

Zara Kruska-Vargues

Zara has used a wheelchair her entire life as she has Cerebral Palsy (quad), and lives with her parents in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. She is a Youth advisor (part time) for the Colorado Medical Home Youth Advisory Council. She attends college continuing her studies to become a counselor for special needs children. She loves reading, taking her dogs for walks, swimming, and dancing with her friends. Zara volunteered at the Ronald MacDonald's house for over 3 years and.

Zara describes herself as happy, positive and having a caring attitude.



MS WHEELCHAIR DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Tiray Spriggs

Tiray Spriggs lives in Washington, D.C. where she volunteers at the One Stop Center, a local unemployment office. Through her volunteer work she is able to assist people with their computer skills and other technical abilities. She has a fiancé that she loves and adores. Tiray enjoys singing in a choir and was a cheerleader in high school.

Tiray describes herself as confident, beautiful, and a diva.



Contestants



MS WHEELCHAIR FLORIDA

Shannon Horne

Shannon lives in Jacksonville, Florida and is a local Radio Talk show co-host for "Physical Issues", a show serving the disabled community of Duval and surrounding counties. Currently she is mentoring high school students with varying disabilities. Shannon enjoys surfing, water skiing, rowing & hand cycling. She was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at 2 yrs old, and has never walked. Shannon describes herself as bold, caring, and passionate about life and the rights of the disabled.

MS WHEELCHAIR INDIANA

Joey Murello

Joey lives in Noblesville, Indiana and is employed by International Medical Group in downtown Indianapolis. She attended Anderson University and enjoys being the Head Coach for Upward Basketball cheerleading team. Joey enjoys volunteering with children in local theatre productions. She has Frederick's Ataxia and has had the degenerative disease since birth. She was mobile until college and has been wheelchair bound since that time. Joey describes herself as dedicated, loyal, and self-assured.



MS WHEELCHAIR IOWA

Samantha Edwards

Samantha lives in Marshalltown, Iowa and is currently a public relations intern at the American Red Cross. She is obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from Iowa State University. Samantha enjoys writing, painting, and going to concerts. She was born with Cerebral Palsy and received her first wheelchair at age four. Samantha describes herself as creative, caring, and studious.



MS WHEELCHAIR KANSAS

Tiffany Nickel

Tiffany Nickel lives in Wichita, Kansas and is an elementary special education teacher for the Wichita Public Schools. She received her education degree with an emphasis in special education from Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas. She enjoys planning, organizing and participating in Wheelchair Sports activities. She suffered a spinal cord injury from a diving accident which occurred in September 1, 1996, almost 14 years ago, and is identified as a quadriplegic.

Tiffany describes herself as social, motivated and assertive.



MS WHEELCHAIR KENTUCKY

Cheryl Medley

Cheryl lives in Louisville, Kentucky and serves on the Board of Directors for the Metro Disability Coalition. She received her Associates Degree in Human Services from Jefferson Community College and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Work from Spalding University. Cheryl enjoys spending time with family and friends, watching University of Louisville football and basketball, and serving as an advocate for others with disabilities. She has Cerebral Palsy and uses an electric mobility scooter.

Cheryl describes herself as caring, committed, and concerned.



Contestants

MS WHEELCHAIR MAINE

Jessica Littlefield

Jessica lives in Presque Isle, Maine and is a college student. She believes in sharing her story with younger people, especially those with disabilities. Jessica enjoys swimming, water skiing, canoeing, and watching sports events. She is a quadriplegic and has been in a wheelchair for five years. Jessica describes herself as outgoing, friendly, and outspoken.



MS WHEELCHAIR MARYLAND

Shannon Minnick

Shannon lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, and works full-time at the National Rehabilitation Hospital as a Spinal Cord Injury Navigator, assisting and mentoring newly disabled individuals. She has a college degree in Social Science. Shannon enjoys skiing, water skiing, power soccer, rowing, dancing, and helping others reach their goals. She's a Quadriplegic C6-C7 and has been using her TDX power wheelchair for 19 years.

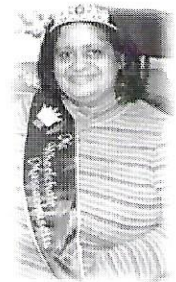
Shannon describes herself as an independent, charming, honest, and most importantly ABLED

MS WHEELCHAIR MASSACHUSETTS

Santara Sen

Santara lives in Norwood, Massachusetts and is currently volunteering for Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) and is also working on a Post-Baccalaureate in Early Childhood Education at Bridgewater State College. She received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Bridgewater State College. Santara enjoys volunteering, spending time with friends and family, and working with children of all ages (with or without disabilities). She has used a wheelchair since she was about three years old due to Spina Bifida.

Santara describes herself as humorous, diligent, and determined.



MS WHEELCHAIR MICHIGAN

Emily Blauw

Emily lives in Ada, Michigan and is a speech-language pathologist working with children and adults at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. She has a Bachelor's of Art's in Psychology from Hope College and a Master's of Art's in Speech-Language Pathology from Western Michigan University, both achieved post SCI. She also volunteers taking her certified therapy dog to local hospitals and offering peer support to newly injured patients. Emily enjoys hand cycling, adaptive snow skiing, and spending time with friends and family. She had a C6 spinal cord injury due to a car accident in 2001.

Emily describes herself as compassionate, determined, and motivate.

MS WHEELCHAIR MISSOURI

Katie Banister

Katie lives in Affton, Missouri and is president of Access-4-All. She received her Bachelor of Science in Recreation from the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg. Katie enjoys writing, performing, and educating her community about the disability culture. Katie has been a woman on wheels since an auto accident in 1990 at the age of twenty-five.

Katie describes herself as determined, organized and vivacious.



Contestants

MS WHEELCHAIR NEBRASKA

Joan Naber



Joan Naber lives on a farm in Waco, Nebraska, and works as a Registered Nurse and Utilization Review Coordinator at York General Healthcare Services. She received her Nursing Diploma from Bryan Memorial Hospital School of Nursing in Lincoln, Nebraska. Joan enjoys knitting, reading, gardening (especially flowers!), crafts, and making new friends. She has the side effect of radiculopathy from radiation treatments for a rare benign growth treated when she was 14. She has used a wheelchair fully for mobility since 1996.

Joan describes herself as determined, enthusiastic, and always smiling.

MS WHEELCHAIR NEW HAMPSHIRE

Jamie Plourde

Jamie lives in Pembroke, New Hampshire and is a senior at Keene State College majoring in Psychology with a minor in Criminal Justice. She has been on the Dean's List every college semester and has been initiated into the Social Sciences Honors Program. Jamie enjoys meeting new people, being an advocate for people with disabilities, horseback riding, caring for her 7 pets, and spending time with her friends. She has Friedreich's Ataxia and has been in a wheelchair for 7 years.

Jamie describes herself as responsible, enthusiastic, and determined.



MS WHEELCHAIR NEW YORK

Michelle Fridley



Michelle Fridley lives in Canandaigua, New York and works with the Center for Disability Rights and ADAPT, to further the independence of all seniors and individuals with disabilities. She is working on her degree in Health Care Administration, but being a full time mom keeps her the busiest! Michelle enjoys bike rides with her daughter Felicia, traveling, and advocating for others. She is a C5/C6 quadriplegic and has been in a wheelchair since she was 9 months pregnant with Felicia, ten years ago. Michelle describes herself as being independent, strong-willed, and outgoing.

MS WHEELCHAIR NORTH CAROLINA

Alexandra McArthur

Alexandra lives in Charlotte, North Carolina and is employed at Davidson College as the Fellow for Leadership Development. She graduated Cum Laude from Davidson College with a Bachelors of Arts in History. Alexandra enjoys meeting new people, reading, planning parties, wine tasting, and working towards inclusion for people with disabilities. She has Muscular Dystrophy and has used a wheelchair since 2007.

Alexandra describes herself as charming, ambitious, and compassionate.



MS WHEELCHAIR OHIO

Amy Jo Riter



Amy Jo lives in Canton, Ohio and is mom to Reece and Annalise Wolfe. She volunteers at Edwin Shaw Rehabilitation, Plus or Minus 60 and is an active member of Toastmaster's #637, VHL Family Alliance and the American Legion Post 44. Amy Jo enjoys traveling and competing in wheelchair sports with the Paralyzed Veterans of America, reading and writing, and spending time outdoors. She has a rare disease that causes tumors called Von Hippel Lindau (VHL), 2yrs 11months ago after walking into surgery to remove a spinal tumor, she awoke paralyzed.

Amy describes herself as courageous, determined and funny.

Contestants

MS WHEELCHAIR OKLAHOMA

Samantha Moreno

Samantha Moreno lives in Ada, Oklahoma. She relocated in 2008 in order to complete her bachelor's degree in Human Services Counseling. Sam will begin her third semester this fall. She is working on a master's in Rehabilitation Counseling and plans on working for the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Sam has enjoyed using a power chair since she was around six years old. She has a form of muscular dystrophy called Spinal Muscular Atrophy. Sam feels she is at a good balance in her life and she has high hopes for today, every day. She describes herself as diligent, kind, and goofy.



MS WHEELCHAIR PENNSYLVANIA

Kristin Durniok

Kristin lives in Pittsburgh, PA, and is employed at UCP/CLASS as a housing/service coordinator. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communication from Edinboro University, and a Master's in Education from Gannon University. Kristin enjoys reading, shopping, and spending time with friends and family. She has used a wheelchair since birth. Kristin describes herself as outgoing, dependable, and organized.



MS WHEELCHAIR RHODE ISLAND

Heather Melaragno

Heather lives in Greenville, Rhode Island and is an Independent Sales Representative for Sensaria Natural Body care. She received her Teacher Assistant Certification from the Community College of Rhode Island. Heather enjoys being with friends and family, singing karaoke, and playing computer games. She was born with Spina Bifida and has used a wheelchair for mobility her whole life.

Heather describes herself as caring, understanding and compassionate.



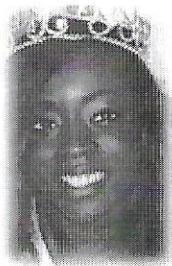
MS WHEELCHAIR SOUTH DAKOTA

Kristina Allen

Kristi lives in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and is employed by the Reeve Foundation as a blogger pending the website being built. She received her Bachelors of Science in Business Management from Colorado Technical University. Kristi enjoys the Dallas Cowboys, rock concerts, fantasy football, crafting, and being an advocate for those with disabilities. She has used a wheelchair since she was 15 from an onset of Transverse Myelitis from a Lupus flare. Kristi describes herself as strong, witty, and unique.



Contestants



MS WHEELCHAIR TEXAS

Kemi Yemi Ese

Kemi lives in Houston, Texas, and is employed with Americorps 4-H Capital Project as a teacher's assistant. She received her Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Studio Art from Baylor University. Kemi enjoys painting, reading, and mentoring newly injured patients at TIRR (The Institute for Research and Rehabilitation) in Houston. She has used a wheelchair for mobility for four years due to a spinal cord injury resulting from a car accident in 2006. Kemi describes herself as empathetic, humorous and driven.

MS WHEELCHAIR UTAH

Kelie Babcock



Kelie Babcock lives in Ogden, Utah and works at an Independent Living Center teaching classes and helping people acquire assistive technology devices. She spends part of her week working as a leader for a legislative advocacy group, advocating for others with disabilities. She received her Bachelors of Science in Social Work and Minor in Visual Art. Kelie enjoys painting, managing a men's wheelchair basketball team, and traveling to new places, whether on a cruise ship or road trips in her mini cooper. She has Escobar Syndrome and has used a wheelchair full-time for ten years. Kelie describes herself as easy-going, happy, and adventurous.

MS WHEELCHAIR VIRGINIA

Niki Swann



Niki Swann lives in Richmond Virginia and is an adjunct English instructor at Rappahannock Community College. She is currently working on her Masters in English Literature at Virginia Commonwealth University. Niki interests include 19th century British literature, disability studies and antiques. She has used a wheelchair since the age of sixteen when she suffered a spinal cord injury due to a motor vehicle accident.

Niki describes herself as vivacious, charismatic, and hard-working.

MS WHEELCHAIR WASHINGTON

Krystal Monteros



Krystal lives in Tacoma, WA and just graduated from Tacoma Community college where she earned her Associate's degree in Sociology. Krystal enjoys helping under privileged, troubled youth and dreams of opening a HOPES (Helping Others Physically, Emotionally and Spiritually) Center dedicated to her best friend Tony McCane who recently passed away. She was born 23 years ago with Spina Bifida and has been a wheelchair user since then. Krystal describes herself as friendly, passionate and caring.

Awards

Ms. Wheelchair America 2011

The title of Ms. Wheelchair America 2011 is chosen by the judging panel. The contestant that earns the highest total score during the judging sessions will become Ms. Wheelchair America 2011.

Lifetime Achievement

The Lifetime Achievement Award is chosen by the judges to the contestant they believe have made the largest contribution and significant impact for people with disabilities.

Nicki Ard Achievement

The Nicki Ard Achievement Award recipient is chosen by the judges and awarded to the woman who exemplifies the philosophy of Nicki Ard, which is to "always exhibit a positive attitude and be willing to serve others." The delegate will have made an outstanding contribution to the disability community through her talents, her efforts and example.

Outstanding Speech

The Outstanding Speech Award is chosen by those in attendance on Speech Night. Each individual attending receives one vote to cast for the contestant they feel delivered the most memorable speech of the evening.

People's Choice

The People's Choice Award is present to the person that gets the largest number of votes, which cost \$1.00 per vote. The funds raised will be used for the MWA 2011 travel fund. People's Choice votes can be purchased anytime during the week.

Congeniality Award

The Congeniality Award is chosen by the contestants. Each contestant casts one vote for the contestant they feel was the kindest, friendliest, most helpful and caring during the week.

Business Award

The Business Award is chosen by the various businesses that present workshops, attend events, or interact with the contestants. They will give this award to the contestant they feel was able to communicate on a variety of topics.

More on the Nicki Ard Award



Nicki Ard was Ms. Wheelchair America 2001 and passed away in 2002, about a month after crowning her successor. Nicki was born with a debilitating disease called Spinal Muscular Atrophy which resulted in her using a wheelchair. She also developed Scoliosis, as a result, she lost full function in her left lung. Although she was given a predicted life span of 13 years, she faced and conquered her physical challenges for almost 30 years. She began singing at the age of 6, established "the Music Ministry of Nicki Ard" in 1986, and released two albums "From Nicki, With Love" and "Walk With Me".

Nicki was also enjoyed writing poetry.



My Thoughts

I've seen times in my life when I was given only five seconds to say the right words, only to have them come out wrong or not at all.
Times when I've loved with every part of me and then lost that which I loved so much.
Times when I knew the odds were against me, but thought, "Who created the odds anyway?"
Times when my heart was so full of grief that tears meant nothing.
Times when "my" life wasn't mine alone.
These are the times that nothing can change.
They will remain forever a part of me, but I cannot bring them back and make them over to be times of joy.
Sadness and grief are inevitable.
So, I must take those memories and hold them close, for I have also seen times of happiness that some only dream of.
This life God gave me is MY life and it is good.
~nicki

A quote from Nicki that the contestants will appreciate

"The night I won was one of the most humbling experiences because every girl there deserved it. I mean it was amazing just being among a group of women who all had the same goal in mind: to overcome the barriers that we face every day."

Judging Criteria

The Ms. Wheelchair America judging is based upon criteria established by the national committee of the Ms. Wheelchair America Program. The following excerpts were taken from the official guidelines:

A. Accomplishments

1. Personal Achievements and Accomplishments Since Disability in the following areas:
 - A. Academic
 - B. Vocational
 - C. Personal
2. Adjustment to Disability

B. Community Skills

1. Ability to Deal with Media, Peers, Civic Groups, etc.
2. Public Relation Skills
3. Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities
4. Self-confidence - Motivation - Initiative - Creativity

C. Self Perception- Projection

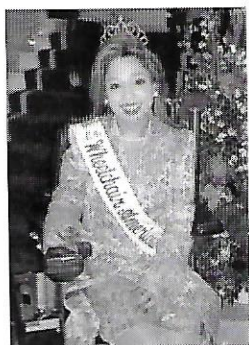
1. Poise and Demeanor
2. Appropriate Attire and Personal Presentation

MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA CREED

*As Ms. Wheelchair America, I promise to do my best
to promote public awareness of people with disabilities.
to use my time and efforts to this purpose.
to strive to achieve the best that is within me.
to offer my hand in friendship to everyone I meet.
to be cheerful, honest and loving.
to give hope to the less fortunate.
to set an example by my attitude.
and to do all this with grace, warmth and dignity.*

Ms.
Wheelchair
A M E R I C A

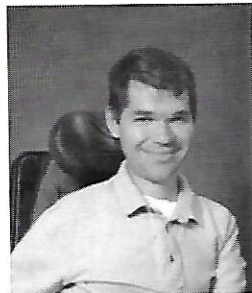
Judges



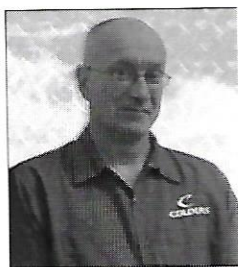
Head Judge - Juliette Rizzo, as one of Maryland's Top 100 Women for 2010, Juliette Rizzo knows firsthand the power of transforming limitations into opportunities. An award-winning public relations professional, Juliette is employed as the Director of Exhibits and Agency-wide Outreach in the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., assisting the Department in its communications and outreach activities, designed to engage the general public, as well as other stakeholder groups, in the President's and Secretary's education agenda for the nation.

Juliette acquired three physical disabilities, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, scleroderma and fibromyalgia. Serving as Ms. Wheelchair America 2005, Ms. Wheelchair Maryland 2004, and an international speaker, event hostess and televised spokesperson, she has appeared in publications and on radio and television, including Talk Radio Europe, the CBS Early Show, The Today Show, the Discovery Health Channel's "National Body Challenge" series, Women's World magazine, Vegetarian Times magazine, NPR, New Mobility magazine, The Washington Post Magazine, the Miami Herald, Washington Hispanic and the Washington Afro American.

Juliette holds a Master of Journalism degree from the University of North Texas and a Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M University. She resides in Bethesda, MD, is serving her third governor-appointed term on the Maryland Commission on Disabilities, is appointed to the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council, and was recognized as the 2009 Disability Advocate of the Year by the League of People with Disabilities in Baltimore. She has judged numerous Ms. Wheelchair America state and national programs. Amidst the stories of great disability leaders, Juliette's passionate message can be found in the compilation "Enabled in Words: The Real Lives, Real Victories of People with Disabilities."



Rocco Arizzi was born in Stratford, NJ in December 1973 as the fourth of 4 children. He was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy at about age 3. When he was 4, he was selected as the MDA Goodwill Ambassador for New Jersey and shortly thereafter began a 2-year reign as National Goodwill Ambassador. His family moved to San Antonio, TX when he was 5. At age 16 Rocco was one of 200 Texas high school students chosen to attend the Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science, a 2-year early entry college program, at the University of North Texas. He went on to attain a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering at University of Texas at San Antonio. While working as an adjunct algebra instructor and tutor at a local community college, he attained a Master's degree in electrical engineering at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. Rocco resides in Barrington, NJ and is employed as an electrical engineer at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Philadelphia. He is also pursuing a PhD in EE from The Catholic University of America in Washington. He served as a judge for Ms Wheelchair Texas in 2006 and 2007, and for Ms Wheelchair Virginia in 2009.



Rick Hayden is a young man happily married to his beautiful wife Karen for close to 23 years. They share three wonderful children, Jenna (18), Aimee and Kyle (12) and have two other children Rick and Richelle and three gifted grandchildren Isabella, Lucas and Reece. Rick has a T-8 spinal cord injury 34 years post and has enjoyed working in the wheelchair industry for the last 24 years. He believes the people he has met during these 24 years are without a doubt the best people on this planet. He has been truly blessed with his family and friends. Currently, Rick holds the position of VP Sales and General Manager for Colours Wheelchair. Colours has moved beyond being just another wheelchair company, but truly a Lifestyle and that is as it should be. Team Colours is a group of

individuals that lead the way for many in the disabled community that wish for a more fulfilling lifestyle filled with excitement and challenge. One small step towards changing the world☺

Judges



Darci R. Luyk, MS, OTR is an Occupational Therapist with over 25 years of experience working in the field of physical rehabilitation. In addition to working as a therapist at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Darci has held the position of Therapy Recruiter and for the past 6 years as the Professional & Community Relations Specialist in the Marketing & Public Relations Department. Darci has served on a variety of boards and task forces including Malcom Baldrige Award Committee for Mary Free Bed; *Therapy Times* Advisory Board Member; Mid-Michigan Healthcare Recruiters Group; Customer Service Training Program Task Force Member & Trainer for Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital and the West Michigan Healthcare Facilities & Kent ISD: Healthcare Career Task Force. Darci has extensive experience in media and public relations and a strong background in event planning.



John Skulborstad was born and raised in South Dakota. Residing in Rapid City, SD since as owner and photographer of Heritage O'Neill Portrait Studio. John serves on the Board of Black Hills Regional Ski for Light. He is the Mayor's advocate as an Advisory Council Member of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). John volunteers with the meals on Wheels program in Rapid City. His interest include working as an advocate for those with disabilities, including guiding visually impaired alpine (downhill) skiers, through the Black Hills Regional Ski For Light. John enjoys outdoor activities such as biking, fly-fishing, hunting, skiing, as well as nature photography.

Judge Coordinator



Jill Caruso was Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 1987. Jill has served on several city, state and national boards advocating for people with disabilities. She competed in Wheelchair Olympics winning many metals. Born and raised in Wyandotte Michigan. Her dream of becoming a teacher was cut short when she was struck by a drunk driver. Jill was blessed with two children, Devan (16) and Mia (4). She worked at the Ability Center of Greater Toledo where she taught individuals with all different disabilities, focusing on skills for living independently. Currently Jill is working as a motivational speaker and consultant, a career she finds fulfilling, because she is still educating people and helping them to achieve their goals. Jill explains that none of this would be possible without God in her life. She owes it all to Him!!!!

Judging

The contestants will have three private judging sessions with the panel of judges during the week. On Friday evening each state titleholder will present a two minute speech. The speeches are also judged. During the Saturday Crowning Gala the five contestants with the highest scores will give their speech again and answer two on stage questions. After the scores are tallied the runner-ups will be announced followed by the new Ms. Wheelchair America 2011.

Workshops

During the week the contestants will take part in many workshops. These workshops are designed to provide information on topics that will help each state titleholder develop various skills that are need to be an effective advocate, while building relationships with each other. Some of the topics are: Mental Toughness, Dealing with Media, Public Speaking, Service Dogs, ADA and A year in the Life of MWA.

Entertainment

The contestants, companions, family members and others will be entertained throughout the week by a variety of special guests and local talent. This year there will be a few theme nights. Movie Night is dress as your favorite movie star or character, but there is a Murderer among them. Crusin' to Motown will include a performance by Living Proof. The contestants will be dressed in "Motown" attire, while listening to some famous Motown Hits!

Amanda Johnson will sing at the welcoming dinner and also at the crowning gala.

A few surprises are also planned!

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Cave City FlashMarket
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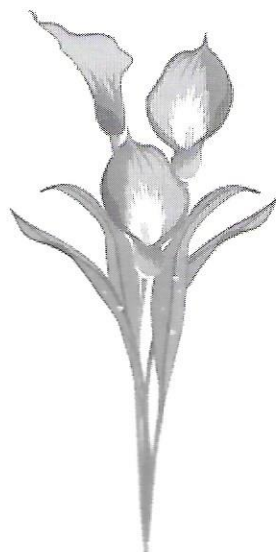
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There are so many this book could be filled with all of your names. You know who you are...Thanks!!**

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Emily uses her voice for children with disabilities!!!



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would like to wish the
best of luck to Emily Blauw
and all the contestants at
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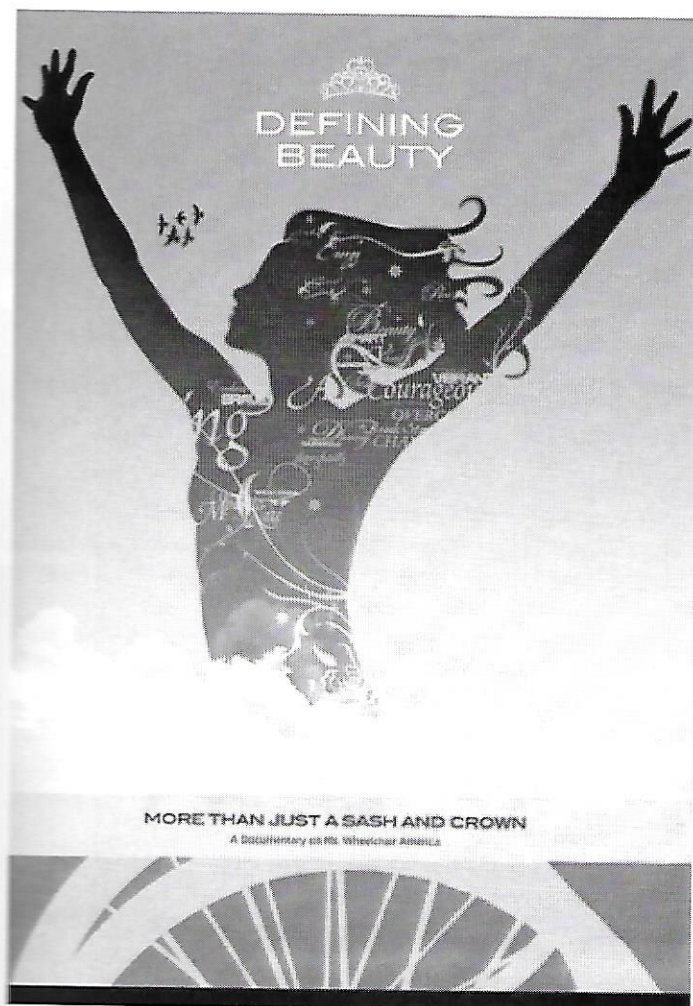
Emily,

Everyone at Health Partners would like to congratulate you on your reign as Ms. Wheelchair Michigan and wish you the best of luck!! You are an inspiration to everyone!!

We are all so proud of you!

Your friends at Health Partners

Best of Luck Emily Blauw!!! Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 2010



DEFINING BEAUTY focuses on the extraordinary lives of five women and their journey toward the 2010 Ms. Wheelchair America pageant. Unlike traditional beauty pageants, Ms. Wheelchair America is a competition based on advocacy, achievement, and communication, that selects the most accomplished and articulate spokesperson for the 52 million Americans living with disabilities. Through issues of sexuality, femininity, independence and personal identity

DEFINING BEAUTY tells the story of women who challenge themselves to live life beyond their limitations and by doing so redefine the perception of beauty and what it means to be disabled.

Directed by Alexis Ostrander and produced by Megan Keene, DEFINING BEAUTY is a non-profit International Documentary sponsored production funded by donations and sponsorship of supportive organizations, corporations and individuals.

To find out more about Defining Beauty

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1. Chakravarti, M., Mitchell, P.A., Nadeau, A.J., Kimbrough, J.A. Patient satisfaction and the LoFric catheter for clean intermittent catheterization. J Urol, 1993; 150(2):390-391. 2. Sutherland, R.S., Krizan, B.A., Padwin, C.S., Mitchell, P.A. Clean intermittent catheterization in boys using the LoFric catheter. 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1334, 1333, 1332, 1331, 1330, 1329, 1328, 1327, 1326, 1325, 1324, 1323, 1322, 1321, 1320, 1319, 1318, 1317, 1316, 1315, 1314, 1313, 1312, 1311, 1310, 1309, 1308, 1307, 1306, 1305, 1304, 1303, 1302, 1301, 1300, 1299, 1298, 1297, 1296, 1295, 1294, 1293, 1292, 1291, 1290, 1289, 1288, 1287, 1286, 1285, 1284, 1283, 1282, 1281, 1280, 1279, 1278, 1277, 1276, 1275, 1274, 1273, 1272, 1271, 1270, 1269, 1268, 1267, 1266, 1265, 1264, 1263, 1262, 1261, 1260, 1259, 1258, 1257, 1256, 1255, 1254, 1253, 1252, 1251, 1250, 1249, 1248, 1247, 1246, 1245, 1244, 1243, 1242, 1241, 1240, 1239, 1238, 1237, 1236, 1235, 1234, 1233, 1232, 1231, 1230, 1229, 1228, 1227, 1226, 1225, 1224, 1223, 1222, 1221, 1220, 1219, 1218, 1217, 1216, 1215, 1214, 1213, 1212, 1211, 1210, 1209, 1208, 1207, 1206, 1205, 1204, 1203, 1202, 1201, 1200, 1199, 1198, 1197, 1196, 1195, 1194, 1193, 1192, 1191, 1190, 1189, 1188, 1187, 1186, 1185, 1184, 1183, 1182, 1181, 1180, 1179, 1178, 1177, 1176, 1175, 1174, 1173, 1172, 1171, 1170, 1169, 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203, 202, 201, 200, 199, 198, 197, 196, 195, 194, 193, 192, 191, 190, 189, 188, 187, 186, 185, 184, 183, 182, 181, 180, 179, 178, 177, 176, 175, 174, 173, 172, 171, 170, 169, 168, 167, 166, 165, 164, 163, 162, 161, 160, 159, 158, 157, 156, 155, 154, 153, 152, 151, 150, 149, 148, 147, 146, 145, 144, 143, 142, 141, 140, 139, 138, 137, 136, 135, 134, 133, 132, 131, 130, 129, 128, 127, 126, 125, 124, 123, 122, 121, 120, 119, 118, 117, 116, 115, 114, 113, 112, 111, 110, 109, 108, 107, 106, 105, 104, 103, 102, 101, 100, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 91, 90, 89, 88, 87, 86, 85, 84, 83, 82, 81, 80, 79, 78, 77, 76, 75, 74, 73, 72, 71, 70, 69, 68, 67, 66, 65, 64, 63, 62, 61, 60, 59, 58, 57, 56, 55, 54, 53, 52, 51, 50, 49, 48, 47, 46, 45, 44, 43, 42, 41, 40, 39, 38, 37, 36, 35, 34, 33, 32, 31, 30, 29, 28, 27, 26, 25, 24, 23, 22, 21, 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0.

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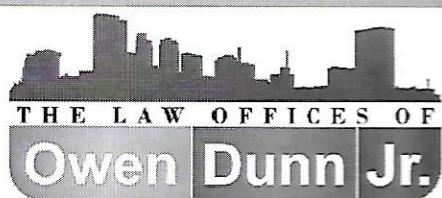
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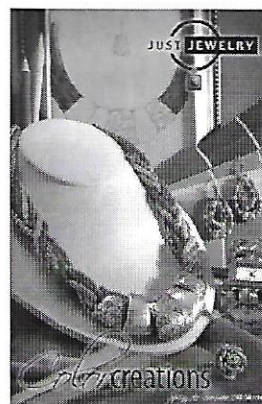
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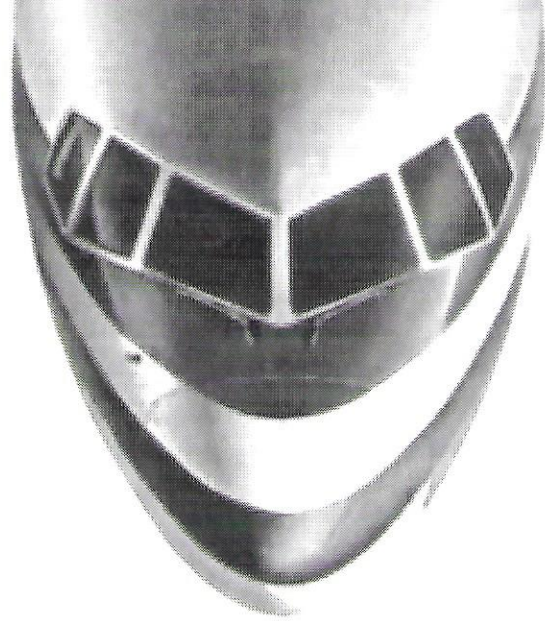
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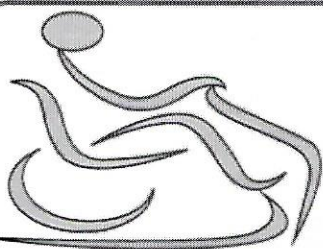
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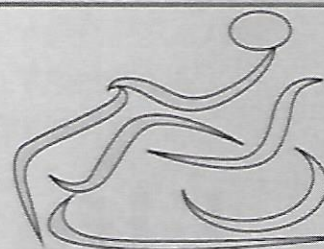


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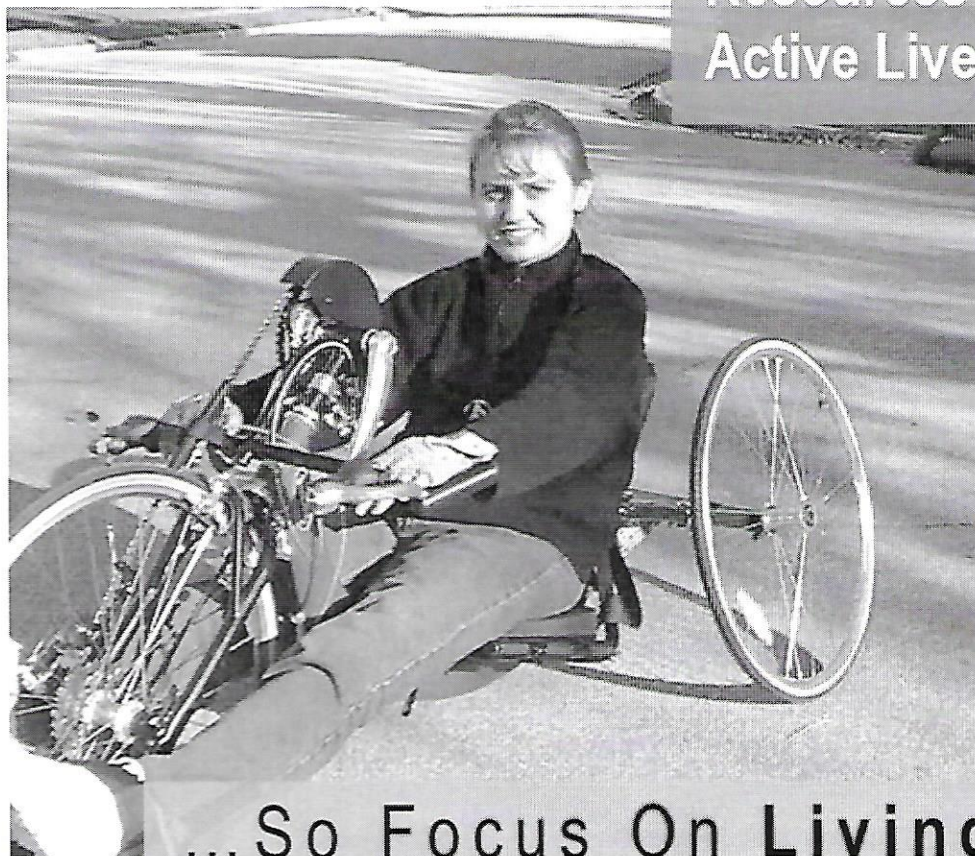
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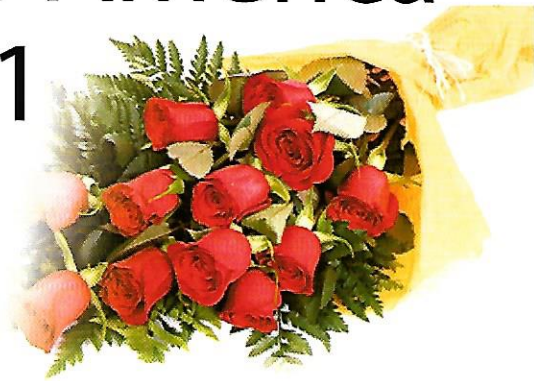
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