

Nicole R. Young

Profile

I am thirty-eight years old and have a form of facioscapulohumeral (FSH) muscular dystrophy, which has heightened my awareness of and understanding for the special needs of others. I currently live in Howard County in a condominium custom designed for my special physical needs. I lead an active lifestyle in the Clarksville community. I also manage our household finances, insurance and taxes. I have family in both Florida and Michigan and many friends and acquaintances here in the Columbia area.

Experience

I remain actively involved in fundraising and awareness-raising activities for the Muscular Dystrophy Association including the annual Labor Day Telethon and the MDA Muscle Walk. I also speak at events for the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore and am an active member of the FSH support group for the Mid-Atlantic region, assisting other members in understanding and obtaining state and federal resources when possible. I was selected to receive the Robert Ross MDA Personal Achievement Award for the state of Maryland in 2009. I am currently serving on the Adult Public Guardianship Review Board for the Howard County Department of Social Services.

I am also a licensed travel agent and I currently assist Young at Heart Travel in obtaining accessible accommodations for elderly and disabled clients. This usually involves contacting and researching different cruise lines, resorts and hotel chains to identify the best options for travellers with special needs. I also take trips to experience these accommodations first hand.

My fiance and I have lived in our custom-designed condo for three years. I was intimately involved in its design, working closely with the builder to create an accessible and usable living space. Its features include lowered countertops, raised cabinet kickdrops, unobtrusive grab bars and a roll-in shower with fold-up seat to accommodate my wheelchair.

While living in Ann Arbor Michigan I worked at the Center for Independent Living, a nonprofit organization chartered to provide disabled individuals with the means and the opportunities to provide for themselves and lead productive lives. In addition, I worked as

a receptionist at Sunrise Assisted Living, where I got to know the seniors and often helped with the social activities which were meant to add to their quality of life.

I have also worked at the Marshall Fields department store in the jewelry and cosmetics department, where I enjoyed helping customers find the "look" that worked best for them. As a certified esthetician I have been an independent contractor, specializing in skin care and makeup. This has helped me understand how important personal appearance can be in helping improve a person's self-confidence and what they can achieve in their lives.