

# Kids with Courage: Where are They Now?

By Carol Masshardt

As I began a series on "Kids with Courage" five plus years ago, one name was suggested more than any other, and it was **Victoria Conrad**. She was then a young woman entering the Boston Collegiate Charter School and devoting herself to school, and the typical issues of independence and growing up. She also had endured multiple surgeries and was living with the complications associated with Cerebral Palsy. Now, she is headed to Framingham State College!

"Then it was just a dream," she said explaining her long term and daily goal to live a life of accomplishment. She, in addition to the usual teenage adjustments, has had the added tasks of

managing multi-layered relationships with Personal Care Assistants, and being the lone student at her school in a wheelchair.

"I'm really scared, but really excited to be leaving," she said. "I'll miss my little sister, watching TV with my parents, and well, the security, but I'm also ready. I want to be a teacher because I'm happiest when I can teach something to someone, or get something done."

"I do want to advocate for people with disabilities, but I don't want that to be my focus," she said. She is a young woman beyond her years in insight and thoughtfulness. For this she gives a well-deserved tip of the hat to her parents because "It's a reflection on my parents and how they raised me to

take on whatever anyone "normal" did." With that support she has developed an ability to challenge herself, and confront daunting limitations with awareness and optimism.

As she leaves for college, Victoria takes with her a love for teaching, modern languages, writing, poetry and "listening to other people." She also hopes that college will have more technology to help her achieve even beyond what she could do in high school. However, her greatest asset is an attitude that will take her far beyond what any school can teach.

"How have I changed? I feel I can do things that I didn't feel strong enough to manage. I think I will ways have the ability to get through things, and I like to



prove people wrong when they think I can't!"

She began life with uncertainty at only 1.5 lbs. She has not only survived, miracle enough, but has thrived

and will now notch up her reach to new dreams and challenges. Congratulations, Victoria.

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