

JrNYLC ESSAY
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LET'S DO IT!

I have titled my summer of 2005, "Let's Do It!" I embraced this title from the ABC Show Extreme Makeover: Home Edition with Ty Pennington. I repeated this statement on several occasions throughout the days during the months of July and August.

Why? you ask? On July 7th, 2005 the last day of my three week camp at Spring Hill in Freetown, Indiana as a Team Service Teen, I broke my left femur in two places after falling off a horse that was 30 minutes into a wooded trail.

In some ways, this would have been no big set back for a typical teenager but due to my Cerebral Palsy I use a power wheelchair for daily mobility. I was 30 minutes away from the nearest hospital and ended up having to be CareFlighted by helicopter to Columbus Children's Hospital in Ohio. I underwent emergency orthopedic surgery to repair my broken femur by having a one foot plate with eight screws surgically placed in my leg. My doctor informed me that I would not be going to the National Young Leaders Conference as the surgery required a three-week recovery period. The doctor's news cemented my determination to attend NYLC. I perceived the importance of NYLC but what I did not realize is that it would be my biggest achievement to date.

On Saturday, July 9th, I was released to go home. The surgeon ordered, in addition to my other limitations, that over the next three weeks, I would have to wear dresses. I am a tomboy at heart. I naturally prefer t-shirts and shorts over dresses. On Tuesday morning, July 12th, I woke up determined to wear shorts and functioning using my wheelchair all day. I told my Mom, "Let's Do It!" Consequently, my surgeon cleared me on Tuesday, July 16th. On Friday, July 29th the family van dubbed "VAN4EM" pulled out of our Dayton, Ohio driveway. We headed for Washington, DC to attend the NYLC and the rest in history! This accomplishment reminds me daily of what I can achieve.

I venture into everyday living life with my disability. Daily, I confront a choice of how I will respond to my disability. The choice is this: will I allow my disability to get in the way of my goals and dreams for the day? Or, will I choose to overcome my disability and face the day before poised with grace?

I love reading books on history. I am very passionate about studying all aspects of history. Figure heads of history inspire because they had their own obstacles to overcome. They chose to overcome them thus leaving their mark in the annals of history. I then apply the example of those famous historical figure heads to my own life and make the choice to overcome the "obstacle" which is my disability.

I would be the best candidate to speak to the students at the JrNYLC scholars in fall of 2005 because my disability is an attention getter that makes people look at me. Consequently, people are more apt to listen to what I say because they are already paying attention to me. I am enjoying the leadership motto of "Let's Do It" and facing each day with discipline, determination, perseverance, purpose and passion.