

Faye WARREN

When Faye Warren was seven years old, she was faced with a double challenge: physical limitations and the assumption that she was mentally impaired. "Without a way to communicate with the outside world that I am a loquacious, interesting person with a quick wit and sense of humor," she recalls, "who was to know that I would become the accomplished woman I am today?"

Faye has Quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy, with all four limbs badly effective, combined with spastic and Athetoid Cerebral Palsy. She reports, "All of the muscles within my body fluctuate from low tone to high tone. My speech is seriously affected; I use a Pathfinder to communicate." It was challenging to be understood and leave special education classes for regular education classes. She says, "Due to my speech impairment, my elementary teachers assumed I was mentally involved—but I proved them wrong."



Among Faye's aspirations were a regular education and going on to college. As she entered seventh grade, her transfer to a new middle school began the change. "There was this remarkable teacher, Ms. Hackett, who realized that I was as smart as anybody else without a disability," Faye recalls. "She gave me a chance and integrated me into two classes to see if I could handle those classes with an aide to assist me. After a month or more, I met some friends who were very willing to assist in taking notes, getting books out of my books bag and so on. If I needed to read a book in class, a friend took off my communication device from the metal stand attached to my tray and put the book in its place." Her head-stick for typing could remain on her head to turn the pages of a book. Worksheets were kept in a plastic swivel

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Age:	28
Occupation:	Program Assistant
Location:	Ocoee, Florida
AT Device:	Pathfinder from Prentke Romich Company
AT Software:	Unity from Prentke Romich Company

paper holder attached to the right side of her communication device (then the Liberator). "All of my friends took the place of an aide."

Faye's philosophy includes helping those unprepared for the unknown. "Everyone is afraid of what is different, even teachers. However, we can change all of their fears toward people with disabilities or others who are dissimilar by educating them concerning different kinds of disabilities and how we can help people with disabilities gain respect."

But Faye is also practical about what assistive technology has helped her accomplish. She reports, "I am able to enter AAC device inventory into my computer at work, I can work independently at my computer work station both at work and at home, and with the type of AAC device I use, I am able to write both short and long presentations slowly. Then I am able to do a presentation at the same rate as someone who is able bodied through use of a single hit key that reads one sentence at a time of my preprogrammed speech."

That combination of philosophical and practical infuses her recollections. "I look back at all of the wonderful things I did throughout my Dr. Phillips high school years and all of the strategies that the teachers and I worked on together as a team," she says. "All that made it as easy and pleasant as possible for me to handle my workload. I commend all of the teachers who were willing to do their very best at teaching me and thought of me as one of their students without a disability who was willing to learn. I felt I belonged at my neighborhood high school. That is because I know the teachers care about teaching our students by trying to give our students the best education there is. Because of their help and encouragement, I was able to attend an away college in North Carolina."

Faye sums up where she has come with AT. She says, "I can express immediate needs, ideas and creative thoughts. It helps others see me as an equal and treat me with respect. I can express my sense of humor and unique personality."