

#ThinkABILITY

RICKII AINEY

My name is Rickii Ainey. In 1980 I was born with Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita, which describes congenital joint contractures in two or more areas of the body. For me, this means my arms don't bend and my knees have very minimal bending.

As a child, my parents (and other family members) advocated for all my medical and educational needs. They were sure to raise me to be as independent as possible. I learned to make my bed, tie my shoes, and do most things my doctors told my mom I wouldn't be able to do. My mom always said, "Learn how to do it now. Who's gonna help you when I'm gone?" To this day, I live my life remembering those words. I don't remember my childhood being difficult. I had plenty of family and friends as a great support system. I attended "regular" classes, and lived a typical life. Adulthood wasn't as easy. I still had family and friends, but what I didn't have was independence. I wasn't able to live alone. I'd lived with my cousin and then



My mom always said, "Learn how to do it now. Who's gonna help you when I'm gone?" To this day, I live my life remembering those words.

later shared an apartment with my ex, but could I survive on my own? How would I get dressed? Who would help me prepare meals for me to eat? I had all of these questions, and then some. I signed up for personal care services here and thought they would be readily available. That was not the case. I didn't know the waiting list was so long. I'd just gotten hired for a new job, and couldn't live on my own. I lived with a friend for 8 months until I was approved for my waiver services. It was a long hard road to advocate for the things I needed. I wasn't knowledgeable about my rights. I wasn't aware of services available for persons with disabilities. No one offers this information to you. It's something you need to search for. I had a long fight with depression and anxiety because I was confused about everything happening at that time.

I'm happy to say that I now live in the community in my own house. I work at a nonprofit that advocates for persons with disabilities. I will forever speak up and speak out on behalf of those who cannot do so for themselves. I still have hurdles to get over, but I have the confidence to know that I can make it.



201 Evans Rd, Bldg. 1, Suite 100, Harahan, LA 70123
Phone: 504.888.9111 Toll-Free: 800.766.7736
Fax: 504.888.0246 E-mail: info@fhfjefferson.org

#Think**ABILITY** is a month long social media campaign to celebrate the accomplishments of individuals with disabilities. The campaign is coordinated by Families Helping Families of Jefferson and held annually during the month of **March**. Learn more about it at <http://fhfjefferson.org/whats-going-on/special-events/thinkability>

Changing Lives. Every Day.