

Kristina



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- Kristina Constant



I am 35 and have Bardet-Biedl syndrome. I live alone and work in Boston as a legislative aide for a state representative. I help constituents with issues, answer emails, work with state agencies and answer phones for the representative. I got my current job because I did and do a lot of lobbying on behalf of the blind, and the representative thought I would be a good advocate for his constituents. I use a screen reader called J.A.W.S. for Windows, which makes my computer talk.

I have a master's degree from Columbia University in education. I went to University of Massachusetts-Amherst for my undergraduate degree. I am fluent in braille. I am successful as an independent adult because my parents pushed me to be independent and I got training in skills of blindness when I was in school while losing my vision. I now have light perception. I also have some medical challenges due to Bardet-Biedl syndrome.

I love to read, ride tandem bike, sing, cook and take walks with my guide dog Bodie, who is a yellow English lab. I belong to a book club in Boston and ride my tandem bike with one of my parents in western Massachusetts when I can.

Having a rare disease can be difficult at times. One thing that has helped me for most of my life is the idea of putting one foot in front of another and being persistent. I am also blessed to have a wonderful support system between my family, friends and doctors. I try to live life to the fullest. There is no limit to your goals and aspirations if you have the skills and support needed and you always put one foot in front of another. Bardet-Biedl syndrome can make life challenging, but a positive attitude, great support system and a drive to succeed can help you achieve the goals you desire and to live a full life.

- *Kristina Constant*