



News Release

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St. Louis Corps employee is Ms. Wheelchair USA 2008 1st Runner up

St. Louis – Ms. Romanda Walker, an employee in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers public affairs office, St. Louis District, was named 1st Runner up in the 2008 Ms. Wheelchair competition held last weekend in Cuyahoga Fall, Ohio.

Walker, who has worked for the Corps for five of the last six summers, is a graduate student currently working to earn a PhD at the University of Missouri, Columbia, where she is studying bioinformatics.

This is an area of biology that uses applied mathematics, statistics, computer science, biochemistry and other disciplines to solve biological questions, usually on the molecular level. The science is based on using powerful computer capabilities to analyze relationships and alternatives that are far beyond the ability of humans to fully grasp without these aids.

The Ms. Wheelchair USA program recognizes individuals for their abilities, their work and contributions to all mankind. It is an annual event open to women 18 and older, regardless of their age or marital status.

Each candidate in the competition must present their platform – their goals and hopes for ways to contribute to society.

Romanda's dubbed her platform, "Getting a New Name through Networking, Advocacy, Mentoring and Education."

Her vision is to develop a program to help high school and college students with disabilities to achieve their educational and life goals by learning and using skills they will need to be successful. She tells, "Nine percent of college students have disabilities on one sort or another. Their best path for success and independence is through education, but unfortunately, the large majority of them drop out of school before they obtain a degree."

Walker goes on to say, "The student with disabilities faces all of the challenges that any other young person faces as he or she leaves home and starts higher education – plus the challenges inherent in their disabilities." She hopes to start a

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Romanda Walker – 2/2/2

program that will help young people anticipate and develop coping mechanisms so they are not held back or discouraged by their disabilities. The program would target high-achieving students in high school and support them as they enter and go through their college experiences.

Ms. Walker will return to the University of Missouri this fall to continue her studies and push to develop her program to help larger numbers of students with disabilities succeed in school and life. She is a resident of Fluorescent, Mo., where she resides with her family.

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Note to Editors: Ms. Romanda Walker is available for interviews by contacting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers public affairs office at the above points of contact. She will depart St. Louis to return to college about August 24.

Photo caption:

Romanda Walker, shortly after being crowned Ms. Wheelchair USA Runner-Up, August 9, 2008, at Cuyahoga Fall, Ohio (approx. 25 miles south of Cleveland).