



Deshae Lott Ministries Inc

Meet the 2013-2014 Recipients of CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries **Outreach Program Scholarships**

Randell Resneder Recipient of a \$1500 CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Scholarship

The Outreach Selection Committee is pleased to announce that **Randell Resneder** is a first-time recipient of the CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries Outreach Program Scholarship. Randell is a candidate for a Ph.D. in Educational Computing at the University of North Texas. He has Spastic Cerebral Palsy, and needs assistance with meal planning, preparation and eating; performing routine medical procedures, transportation; housekeeping; communication; and personal hygiene.

When Randell was diagnosed at the age of six months, his mother was told he would never walk or talk, nor would his mental age and abilities ever exceed those of a fourteen-month old.

He has obviously confounded all the naysayers, as he is now the pastor of a church that ministers to those with special needs, the Founder and Executive Director of Disability Awareness Programs of Texas, and a member of several state committees and boards.

Randell enjoys teaching online, and believes that the Ph.D. will improve not only his professional credentials, but also his credibility as a teacher. He also hopes that his honesty with his students about his own disability will help them to see the potential for excellence in their own future students with disabilities.

Though faith and family are most important in Randell's life, obtaining his Ph.D. is also of utmost importance, and he feels that the door is wide open for his success. We look forward to hearing what the coming year will bring.



Jeffrey Lester
Recipient of a \$2000
CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries
Outreach Program Scholarship

We are beyond delighted to award this scholarship to Jeffrey Lester, who was not only our very first scholarship recipient in 2010, but also joined our Outreach Selection Committee in order to give back to our organization and help others benefit from our Outreach Scholarships and Grants. This year, Jeff withdrew from the Selection Committee in anticipation of reapplying for the scholarship.



Jeff has ALS (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's Disease), and needs assistance with all aspects of daily life except seeing and hearing.

When Jeff received his first scholarship, he was working on his Master of Business Administration and his Master of Science in Finance. He has since earned both of those degrees, and is now pursuing a Masters in Business Analytics with an eye toward eventual full employment and ever-increasing independence from government assistance. As he works toward these goals, he continues to be a voice for greater inclusion and opportunity for those with disabilities.

In his own words, "One of the things I discovered after being diagnosed with ALS is that people generally put those of us who are dealing with illness and disability into a box of dependence where they believe our lives revolve around merely existing. They admire us for attempting to go to a baseball game, and praise us for small accomplishments, but when we try to take back our lives, at least in a professional sense, they lovingly pat us on the head and shoo us behind the walls of the neat little box they have for us... You hear about a glass ceiling when it comes to women in the workplace advancing to higher positions, but what is never recognized is the brick wall that is in the place of the door for people with disabilities, especially severe physical disabilities, when we are just trying to get in the door to work. We do not like being dependent on others for our care, but reluctantly, we accept this as our fate because of the unfortunate circumstances of our physical condition. However, in today's technologically-driven world, we should not be expected to sit in the corner of dependence allowing our gifts and drive to succeed to wither and die on the vine just because someone fails to recognize the ripe fruit there to be used nor should we who are disabled accept this as our destiny when we have much we can contribute."

Claire Abraham
Recipient of a \$2000
CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries
Outreach Program Scholarship



Another repeat recipient of our scholarship, Claire continues working toward a Master of Science in Information from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has Spinal Muscular Atrophy Type 2, a hereditary neuromuscular disease that is profoundly progressive. Diagnosed in infancy, she never walked or crawled. She has used a power wheelchair since the age of 3. She requires assistance with all everyday activities listed on our application except communication (writing, typing, speaking, etc.), seeing and hearing.

While an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, majoring in English with a minor in Russian Language, Literature, and Culture, Claire navigated the transition from having her very supportive mother drive her 40 minutes each way to classes to living independently on campus. In handling the many aspects of this move, from finding accessible living space, to hiring caregivers and managing

all the details, she realized she could use her experience to help other young adults not as blessed with family and resources. With a Master of Science in Information, specializing in Community Informatics, she entered graduate school hoping to develop ways to use social media and other tools of technology to help disadvantaged communities share resources for the purpose of developing cohesion and mutual support. She writes, “An organizational movement utilizing social media would possibly inspire more students with disabilities to live on campus whilst attending university. At the very least, this endeavor would give young adults a chance to connect with others in similar situations, thus creating more cohesion within the community through information/resource sharing.”

Now in her second year of graduate school, Claire continues to discover the potential of instructional technology and has come to realize that she can combine her love of teaching and learning and her desire to be an advocate for the disabled in the environment of the library. When she took Principles of Software Design for Learning, she served as a mentor to elementary and middle school students via web-based interaction. She has also been working as a User Information Service Assistant for the university’s Undergraduate and Graduate Libraries. In that capacity, she has worked with a wide variety of patrons across the academic spectrum, which has not only developed her customer service skills, but has also further served to convince her of her passion for connecting people effectively with relevant and beneficial information. Additionally, she spent an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) working in Washington D.C. at the American Library Association’s Office of Information Technology Policy. During that time, she researched eBook access and lending policies in American libraries as well as the ALA’s national public policy work in the area of telecommunications, publishing, copyright and access to information. The result was a short speech targeted toward librarians, advocating for greater eBook access, which has profound implications for disabled people.

All her classroom and extracurricular experiences have confirmed for her that librarianship is the path to realizing her goals of advocacy and promoting lifelong learning, and we are happy to continue to do what we can to support her on that journey.

Tiffane King
Recipient of a \$1500
CMMS Deshae Lott Ministries
Outreach Program Scholarship

A repeat scholarship recipient, **Tiffane King** is beginning her second year of law school at the University of California at Irvine. As a result of a gunshot wound in 2005 she sustained a nearly-fatal, traumatic spinal cord injury, and needs assistance with mobility, transferring and position changing; personal care; occupational therapy, physical therapy; routine medical procedures; and housekeeping.

As she began to adjust to her new life, she was shocked by the realities of her life post-hospitalization: the lack of continuity of care, the fact that physical therapy was impossible to attain, and the fact that there was no effective system of protocols to monitor and address the needs of someone in her condition. A relentless advocate for her own care, she came to the realization that everyone navigating these limitations deserves such an advocate.

To hear her tell her own story, “ As a formerly active, able-bodied woman suddenly thrown into the world of the disabled, I obtained a unique and painful perspective on rejection and discrimination that can only be achieved by way of experience.... An initial ‘handicap’ that I fought to overcome was the feeling of being “small” in a society that was enormous, established and set in its ways. “ Armed with this new awareness, she determined to pursue a specialty in disability law.

She has now finished her first year of law school with a cumulative average of 3.141, and has done so in spite of a medical setback during her second semester that required surgery and two weeks of hospitalization followed by extensive physical therapy. She still kept up with classes and communicated with professors from her hospital room. Her efforts have not gone unrewarded, and she has earned an externship with a federal judge. She looks forward to this work as a means to learn more about the law, and also wanted us to know that the position has already given her an opportunity to advocate for the disabled. Astonishingly, in this day and time, the court had provided no handicapped parking for disabled individuals who wished to enter the courthouse. (Surprisingly, no one had sued!) After having to seek help from someone to push her wheelchair several blocks, she spoke out and was ultimately able to obtain the designated parking spaces. She found this brush with advocacy a very rewarding experience, which bodes well for her very promising career. Congratulations, Tiffane, and we wish you well as you begin your second year of law school and work toward your 2015 graduation.

