

VERBATIM

By Josie Byzek

WELCOME TO VERBATIM, our new back page featuring the confessions of NM readers — about perspectives, pet peeves and unexpected pleasures.

CAROLYN ANDERSON, a T12-L1 para, lives in Tucson, Ariz., with her two toddlers, husband and dog. Besides being a stay-at-home mom, Anderson is an artist. She says ever since she stopped painting rage and started painting dogs, her work has sold much better. Check her out at www.muttbutt.com.



Photo by Elizabeth McPeak

How did you **adjust** to your new life?

I had a big old drinking problem until 11 years ago. Years ago I read the book Spinal Network, and a guy just hinted enough that he was in recovery. Then later I ran into him playing basketball right about the time I was ready to get sober and it was really cool. So you can out me, maybe it will help someone else.

How has your **disability** shaped you?

Like a gourd with really skinny legs. Seriously, living with SCI has given me a lot of patience and compassion, empathy.

What **irks** you?

Whining. And when people complain about their sinuses.

What was your **"Aha"** moment?

The moment I stopped blaming anyone for my situation — my doctors, my parents, George Bush, my insurance, blah blah blah poor me — and took accountability for my own life, health and happiness.

Describe the **day** you got yourself together.

I stopped trying to wear stilettos, sexy strappy heels, thigh-high boots — and got a big ol, pair of clunky doc martens instead. Now I love myself, orthopedic shoes and all.

Who **mentored** you?

My first service dog, Tyler J. Worthington Labrador extraordinaire, taught me all about joy, unconditional love, and learning to not take anything too seriously.

What profound **wisdom** would you like to share?

Get a dog.

SHOCK ME.

I don't watch television.

OK, that's not completely true. I rarely watch television. I have nothing against it. At times in the past I've watched quite a bit, but right now I don't really pay much attention to it.

In fact, even though we live in Tucson I didn't know until days before the Super Bowl that the Arizona Cardinals were playing. I was like, "Oh, is there a sports game this weekend?"

I mean, I knew something was up, because there were all kinds of Cardinal jokes flying around Facebook— but I didn't get them. Also, I kind of knew the Cardinals made the final four teams because people were on the street corners selling T-shirts. I was like, "What's up?"

We do have a television, but we keep it in the bedroom. We'll haul it out, though, so the kids can watch *Thomas the Train*.

BE IN VERBATIM — tell us a little about yourself in an e-mail to Josie@newmobility.com