

Janice Borgwardt Story
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I was born in Ottumwa, Iowa in 1962 with the eye condition of Retinopathy of Prematurity. My parents were told when I was about two years old that they should send me to the school for the blind when I was ready to begin school. My parents decided that they did not want me to be away from home at such a young age, so they enrolled me in the local school district. I don't remember to many things from my early years of school, however, I do remember during first grade and learning to read that I had different books than the other children. Mine had larger print and black and white pictures, their books had colored pictures. I wanted to use books like the others and I found that if I held it close enough I could read it, so I did.

When I started in the seventh grade my parents did send me to the Iowa Braille & Sight Saving School. I had heard about this school a couple of years before this while in Iowa City at the University hospital for an eye surgery. I was very excited about attending this school. I have very memorable experiences from IBSSS, most of which are outside of the classroom. I was able to be involved in athletics, music, and many recreational activities. One of the most stilled talked about event happened around the 1979-1980 school year when we took one of our smaller students hooked him up to the flagpole by his belt loops and ran him up the pole. It was amazing to see how fast

houseparent's could run from different sides of campus to get him down. For the record someone still had a hold of his feet when he was rescued by the houseparent's.

After high school I attended Indian Hills Community College in Ottumwa and received a diploma in Chef Training. After completing this course I returned to IBSSS as a cook. I worked at IBSSS for 2 ½ years and then I returned to college to obtain my Bachelor's degree in Business Management.

In 2007 my vision had deteriorated to the point where I was having great difficulty in doing daily tasks. I contacted the Iowa Department for the Blind for assistance. I became a library user and with the help of IDB I learned to use a long white cane, learned Braille and many other helpful non visual techniques around the home.

I am thankful for my parents for not treating me any differently than they did my brother or sisters. I am thankful for the education I've had not only in my local public school but at IBSSS and later in college. Life is good and I'm proud to have been born in Iowa and have had the opportunities I've had and look forward to the opportunities that will come in my future.