Spirit of a Champion

The Cindy Bentley Story
My name is Cindy Bentley

I am here to tell you about my life story
My life beginnings

Born in 1957 at Milwaukee County Hospital

I was only given 24 hours to live

- I was born with fetal alcoholic syndrome and cocaine in my system. My mother was sent to prison. I was sent to the foster care system.
Foster Care System

While in the care of foster parents, one family thought I should be dead. She gave me third-degree-burns which covers my stomach, back and right arm.

I had 9 skin graft surgeries.
I was put in a state institution because of many health problems related to the drugs I was born with in my system

– Seizures
– Emotional problems

It was the state that decided I should be sent to the institution. It was Southern Wisconsin Center in Union Grove, WI
Moving out of the Institution

Moved out in 1984 to Oakland Group Home in Milwaukee.

Moved out with the help on my legal guardian, Jan Fitzgerald

I had to learn because at the institution everything was done for me
  – Set an alarm clock
  – Get my self up
  – Dress my self
  – Fix my own breakfast
  – Daily living skills with the help of Alberta Smiley
  – Bus system to go to work
Special Olympics

First team in West Allis, WI

Second and Current Team
North Suburban
Track & Field
Basketball
Bowling
Volleyball
Soccer
Snow Shoeing
Special Olympic Training

Athlete leadership program 1990
Learned how to be a good leader and Special Olympics Mission

First assignment was to speak in Maryland at a conference to doctors from all over the world. One doctor was from the Soviet Union and I had to learn to say his name. Talked about your life story for the first time. Eunice Kennedy Shriver was in attendance.

I was on the Maury Povich show in Florida with 5 other athletes and he called us kids, and we educated him that we were adults, not kids.
Special Olympics Recognition

In 1991 I received the female athlete of the year in Colorado from the United States Olympic Committee. This was the same award that Dan Jansen received. I was nominated by Jeannie from the Madison Special Olympic office. This was also my first plane ride.

I met James Brady, who worked with President Reagan and was shot at the same time as the President. He gave me a book on his life and autographed it. I still have the book today.
Special Olympics

In 2000 I was nominated by local coaches to be a global messenger. I was awarded the position. From 2000-2001 I traveled all over the world.

My first trip was to Holland
My second trip was Anchorage
My third trip was to the White House to have dinner and see a Special Christmas performance. I sat at the head table with Mrs Clinton. I talked to Chelsea about her cat. I introduced Stevie Wonder.
My fourth trip was to Greece
I also had a State Dinner with President Bush and I gave him a bravery medal for keeping us safe during 9/11.

Other places I have been:
London 3 times
Washington DC
New York
I have held many jobs in my life. But my dream job was to work at People First of Wisconsin as an advocate specialist to help others become empowered and to have a voice. I am getting closer to achieving this goal.

I want to be treated as any regular staff person would want to be treated.
Boards

I served on the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities for 15 years. I taught the Board how to include people with intellectual disabilities. I also taught them to write things so that I could understand them.

I was the first athlete to serve on the Special Olympic Board.

I have served on many other Boards and Committees.
Currently I am an Advocate Specialist

I have been employed by People First for 11 Years

I run 3 People First Groups

I attend Board meetings

I attend a lot of meetings and conferences to learn how to help individuals with intellectual disabilities

I talk to many different groups on how people with disabilities should be treated

I have a job coach to assist and stay on track
Living on My Own

Live in my own apartment, at the same address for almost 22 years

I have 2 sweet baby kitties. Oreo & Blossom

I make all of my own decisions:
  - When I get up in the morning and when I go to bed
  - What I wear
  - I do my own laundry
  - I take care of the cats
  - I set up my own transportation
  - I decide what recreation activities I want to do
  - I go to church
  - I have 2 caregivers that help me to stay on track and problem solving.