

Good Afternoon Everyone,

My name is Richie Carrier; I am 31 years old and from Winthrop, Massachusetts. I wanted to give everyone a brief timeline of what led to my diagnosis and also provide some information on how FA has affected my decision making as related to my career and most importantly, my family.

I pretty much had a “normal” childhood; I was active and participated in sports until the end of high school. Towards the end of high school, I became clumsier and just really chalked it up to that. I entered college in 1998 (I was 19 years old). My girlfriend at the time and now my wife and I applied for seasonal jobs at the Post Office. Part of the process involved a physical exam and part of the exam I had to step up on a scale for my weight, I had issues with this and my balance began to shake. The DR asked me if I ever had a Neurologic problem. I said no and he said, “Sir, I could pass you because you have passed all portions of the exam, but I feel there is something else going on.” He referred me to another doctor. After many, many tests, I was told I had FA. I was 19, no one in my family ever had the disease and my only sibling did not show any symptoms. I was at the stage in my life where many major life decisions are made, college is happening. After college what will happen? Will I get a job? Will I get married? Will I have children? Is FA going to have a role in all these decisions?

I am now 31 years old, and can answer yes to three out of the 4 questions I had for myself. FA played a roll in college at which point I did not use a wheelchair or walking assistance. This led to me being the first student in class and the last to leave, and trust me I didn't do this to get the most out of class. I participated in College graduation in

2003. I still did not use a walking aide although the person who received their diploma before me must have had bruises on his arm, because he allowed me to hold on to him.

Entering the job market I did not want FA to play a role, however I feel it did. I had second interviews but never got a callback as I always felt the potential employer watched me walk out, and must have asked him or herself, “What is wrong with this kid?”

After an accident where I broke my ankle in 2003 I applied for a position with the Commonwealth of Mass and began working there in January 2004. I now used a wheelchair because of my broken ankle, or so everyone thought. I have used a wheelchair since and I still work there, although in a different unit and a different capacity. I now take full advantage of having FA, I self identify as a person with a disability; I am involved with marketing for all state workers for charitable giving.

The only decision I made where FA didn't play a role is marriage. This was my in-laws decision. They approved, and Maria and I were married August 27, 2005. FA played a major role in our last decision to have children. Maria and I shared the choice to have children. In doing so, we wanted to make sure our children would not have FA. We were lucky that Maria is not a carrier and have two beautiful daughters as a result. Gabriela was born in August of 2006 and Mia was born in February of 2008. We are all here today to try and reach the common goal of a cure, and until that day, leaning on one another for support is the only antidote.

Thank you!