

**Leslie**

"If I hadn't joined Youth in Charge, I wouldn't be getting ready for college. I wouldn't have a career goal. I would still be sitting home, watching TV and doing nothing. Instead, I have a real job and my dreams are now my reality."

Independent Living Centers Help Youth With Disabilities Reach Their Goals

Leslie came to CIDNY's Youth in Charge (YIC) program at age twenty-two. As part of her YIC program, Leslie became an intern at CIDNY's busy reception desk. "Working at CIDNY has helped me learn so much. I learned how to answer phones and direct calls in a busy office. I've had the opportunity to try so many new things.

"Because of my experience as an intern at CIDNY I now have a career goal. I want to work as an administrative assistant in an office. I also learned that having an adult job is hard work and takes a lot of skills. I feel much more prepared for what I will face when I move into full time employment. I believe I will have a better chance at success because I know what will be expected of me.

"I always wanted to go to college someday, but I never knew how I was going to get there. I never knew that there were programs at colleges that can help students with learning disabilities. Now I know what steps I have to take and I know I will go to college."

Leslie also credits CIDNY with helping her overcome the chronic anxiety that set in after the death of a close friend. "Before I came here, I was scared to be away from my mom. Having this job helped me become an individual again. It helped me feel less isolated. After working side by side with other people with disabilities who have really good jobs, I know I can succeed."

Leslie is proud of her accomplishments. "If I hadn't joined YIC, I wouldn't be getting ready for college and I wouldn't have a career goal. I would still be sitting home, watching TV and doing nothing. I would still be having panic attacks. Instead, I have a real job and my dreams are now my reality."