

## Spina Bifida Association has recently announced 2010 Award Recipients!



The Spina Bifida Association has recently announced 2010 Award Recipients. Awards were presented during the 37th Annual SBA Conference, Celebration Luncheon held on June 30<sup>th</sup> in Cincinnati, Ohio. Both **sbaMass** nominations were chosen as winners in their categories. They are: SBA Young Adult Leadership Development (Santara Sen) and the **sbaMass** Chapter for Community Outreach Award. Learn more about both awards by clicking here!

**OUTREACH AWARD:** The Spina Bifida Association of Massachusetts (**sbaMass**) annually participates in several outreach activities related to prevention of Spina Bifida and Folic Acid awareness. These include, bridal fairs, women's expos, health fairs and other community events. Typically attendees move quickly through an exhibit hall and there is just a brief opportunity to grab their attention. The **sbaMass** developed a business size card with "Fast Facts about Folic Acid" derived from SBA materials. The card reads:

### ***Fast Facts about Folic Acid***

- All women who could possibly become pregnant need **400 micrograms** per day
- Most women don't plan a pregnancy, so it is important to get in the habit of taking **folic acid** every day so your body has it when you need it.
  - Folic Acid** is most important when building new cells, like before and during pregnancy.
  - Folic Acid** helps reduce the risk of neural tube birth defects by 70%.
- Folic Acid** can be found in: vitamins, **Folic Acid** pills; Food Sources: Cereals, grains pasta ½ cup chickpeas, 1 cup cooked frozen peas, 1 cup of strawberries, 1 medium orange, Dark green leafy vegetables, ½ cup steamed broccoli, and whole wheat bread.

For more information log onto [www.sbaMass.org](http://www.sbaMass.org)

This card is attached to an item i.e.: key chain, pill box. These items are easy to distribute and are welcomed by most all attendees, men and women. Frequently an individual will request a second, or third for their daughter, daughter in law, niece or neighbor.

The **sbaMass** has accomplished three goals with each interaction: outreach to women and their partners about the benefits of folic acid, awareness of the Spina Bifida Association and a positive contact with **sbaMass**. For individuals who request, additional information is available at the booth.

**YOUNG ADULT LEADERSHIP AWARD:** The Spina Bifida Association of Massachusetts (**sbaMass**) nominated Santara Sen for the Young Adult Leadership Development Award.

Santara Sen received a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a concentration in Child Psychology in May of 2009 from Bridgewater State College. Since graduation, she has continued to work on behalf of children with disabilities at Challenger Camp in Norwood and also the Massachusetts Hospital School in Canton. She hopes to go back to school for a degree in Early Childhood Education and become a kindergarten teacher in a public school system in Massachusetts. Santara took course on disability

issues while in college and signed up to be a part of the ADA New England's Student Advisory Group. This group assists people with disabilities share their stories through video. Her video is available on YouTube, type in "Sanatara's Spina Bifida Disability".

These factors and her own confidence and perseverance helped her secure the title of Ms. Wheelchair Massachusetts 2010. ([www.mswheelchairmass.org](http://www.mswheelchairmass.org)). In November 2009, Santara was crowned Ms. Wheelchair Massachusetts 2010. It was important for Santara to have this role because when her parents first found out that she was going to be born with a disability (Spina Bifida), they were overwhelmed with the news. At the time they did not know who to turn to for help or advice and felt very much alone. She does not want other families to go through that. Instead she wants families to know that there are resources and people who can help them.

Santara has participated in events related to disability awareness at the Massachusetts State House. In addition Santara was the Honorary Chairperson for the Inaugural ***sbaMass Walk N Roll*** held in May. Her platform during her reign is to raise disability awareness. This year she hope to not only advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities and their families, but to convey the message that people with disabilities are just like everyone else. Santara wants to work towards eliminating stigma associated with disability about what we "should do" and replacing it with the things that we "can do". As Santara has moved into her post college years, she has begun to expand her leadership and advocacy skills. Santara has exhibited skills as a teacher and coach working with young children, a leader in advocating for disability rights at the state level and as a mentor in her role as Ms. Wheelchair Massachusetts.

The Spina Bifida Association of Massachusetts is pleased to have the opportunity to work with Santara.