

MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



CARMEN SHEVOLUP ZELENKA

It was a scorching hot but beautiful day when Carmen and Clayton married in an outdoor ceremony this July. It was only fitting that Carmen had her mother, Darline, walk her down the aisle. When Carmen was only three and a half years old, her father was hit by a drunk driver and killed instantly. As a result of this tragic hit and run accident, Carmen and her mother have been especially close. Carmen refers to her mother as her lifeline and best friend and credits her efforts as the reason why Carmen has had a full and happy life.

Carmen remembers when as a little girl, others would stare at her as she walked through the mall. She would ask her mother why people were looking at her and her mother would tell her that it was because she was so beautiful. Carmen explains that

she was taught not to feel sorry for herself but to accept her disability and move forward. She remembers her mother's decision to integrate Carmen into a regular classroom and the encouragement she received from her mother to be open with her classmates about her disability. Carmen remembers showing her orthotics to her grade one class and how by helping her classmates to understand her disability, she helped them to accept and befriend her. Carmen was taught to emphasize the similarities between herself and others, rather than the differences. She appreciates that she wasn't sheltered and was in fact encouraged to go out with friends, date and get a part-time job.

Carmen met Clayton through a mutual friend at a club where their friend was the deejay. Carmen went to pay her tab at the end of the evening and discovered that it had already been paid for by Clayton! They exchanged numbers and began to date. Carmen thinks that the moment she really fell for Clayton was when he arrived with a beautiful Kitten for her, snuggled against him inside his jacket. These days the newlyweds are spending time setting up their house and yard, enjoying evenings at home watching movies and indulging in chocolate fondue, and going to the park with their dog, Oscar (who is a survivor of a hit and run accident one year ago).