

## Spotlight on Staff: Danielle Sikoryak

I was born and raised on Long Island, New York, about 30 minutes from Manhattan. I am the youngest of four children and I have eight nieces and nephews. This past summer, I got engaged to my wonderful fiancé Thomas, who is a Lieutenant in the United States Navy. We live together in Arlington with our fun and energetic Cairn Terrier named Scotty. We are currently planning our 2012 wedding here in the DC area.

While living in New York, I was a substitute teacher for Babylon School District on Long Island, and then I became an Eighth-Grade English Teacher for the New York City Department of Education. I attended St. John's University for both my Undergraduate and Graduate Degrees. Go Red Storm! Even though I have only recently become a member of the Franklin Sherman Community, everyone has truly gone out of their way to welcome me and help me with my transition.

I have many volunteer experiences with people with disabilities. Throughout high school and college, I volunteered at an adult residence center for adults with disabilities who could not live on their own. Many times, their parents were older and passed away and their siblings moved away so no one would visit them during the holidays, birthdays, etc. So as a volunteer, I went with my local youth group and brought food and snacks and had a "day of fun" with them playing holiday themed games and singing songs a few times a year. I was also a volunteer for Special Olympics, and a bowling coach for a particular program in New York for a year where teens/young adults with disabilities would come and bowl and have a day out. During college, I also worked as a bank teller and they hired someone with high-functioning autism. No one had the patience to teach him the necessary skills for the job so I sat with him each day and became his coach to help him succeed. It took a great deal of patience on my part as well as bank customers, but it was a very satisfying feeling when I saw that person succeed.

This past summer I moved to Arlington and love it here, other than the traffic of course. I appreciate the many outdoor activities and historical places the metro area has to offer. When I am not at work, I enjoy exercising, cooking, playing tennis, and taking my dog to chase squirrels at the local park.