
Write a brief biographical sketch **in the third person** outlining events and people in your life that have had a significant influence on your career decisions. Include experiences, competencies, and interests that may be helpful in your internship.

Erika Francis was born into a loving family that realized the importance of physical education and fitness. At an early age, she was introduced to competition through sports activities. At a neighborhood YMCA, she swam, kicked, batted and ran her way through every sport offered. Her mother, a nurse, realized the health benefits of athletics. Her father, an elite athlete himself, really had hoped for a son, but was blessed with two beautiful daughters. He was thrilled, however, at the chance to aid aspiring athletes, even if they could never play professional football. As early as age eight, Erika began assisting her father as an official at University of Florida track meets. Her interest blossomed and she became an avid fan, attending virtually every sporting event in Gainesville. Under her father's tutelage she learned about the rules, strategies, history, and participants of many sports.

By high school, Erika had competed in every sport her school had to offer young women. She received numerous awards and much recognition for her skill and talent. As captain of many teams, she clearly demonstrated her leadership skills. One day, on her way to swim practice at the University of Florida campus, she wandered over to the basketball practice court of the Gators. Mesmerized by the work ethic and incredible talent on the court, she immediately decided she wanted to attend the University of Florida and pursue a career in the field of athletics.

In college, while continuing athletic competition by participating in many different intramural sports, she decided to venture into the management aspect of athletics. Her initial project was to organize the field events portion of a fund raising event sponsored by her sorority to benefit the American Heart Association. She continued her work with the track and field, becoming a certified USA Track and Field Official. When the National Junior Olympics meet was held in Gainesville in the summer of 1994, Erika was assigned to be an assistant to the meet director, Mr. Tom Turk.

Erika has always been interested in helping others enjoy participating in athletics. She loves working with children and has taught hundreds of children how to swim. Fortunately, an opportunity arose and she decided to volunteer for the Special Olympics. Her eyes as well as her heart were opened to a whole new diverse community where she knew she could make a contribution. Utilizing her talents for organizing and working well with people, she continues to work with Special Olympians: very special athletes! Erika, herself, has overcome adversity by achieving in spite of having been seriously electrocuted and suffering through many subsequent hospitalizations as a child. She continues working toward her dream of a career in athletics and will make a difference wherever her hard work and determination takes her.