

Meet Andrea Mclay

Andrea was born in Cardiff, Wales in 1986 where her parents and older sister still reside. Her resounding memory is of growing up within a loving & caring family and she still remembers with fondness sharing Christmas festivities with her family. Andrea says that she grew up thinking she could do whatever she set out to do to fulfil her dreams and admitted to being proud of what she has achieved to date but there are many things she would still like to do. She is indebted to her family for providing her with what she describes as a thorough grounding in life.

Andrea lived a normal childhood but at the age of 16, she unfortunately contracted meningitis in October, 2002 and throughout her prolonged illness, experienced around 20 operations to try and save her limbs. By May, 2003, a decision was made by all involved to amputate both her lower limbs but at this time, she also suffered from kidney failure which necessitated her being placed on dialysis. She remained on dialysis until December, 2003 when she was lucky enough to be the recipient of a kidney transplant from a fellow 17 year old girl. Andrea has made contact with the donors' family and has conveyed to them her heartfelt thanks for this wonderful gift which has transformed how she leads her life. At the time of writing, Andrea says that her health is good and the transplant has been a huge factor in her ability to enjoy life.

After amputation, Andrea returned to her schooling to complete her "A" levels and a 3 year bachelor of nursing degree then she worked as a nurse in Llantrisant at Royal Glamorgan Hospital for 2 years. Around this time, Andrea knew of her husband to be, Mike, via email as her older sister had met Mike in Malaysia in 2000. Mike came on to the UK in 2006 as part of his OE and their relationship blossomed. The couple made a decision to return to NZ to live and they arrived one month after the February, 2011 earthquake which she says was very challenging. Mike & Andrea married in 2013 and she became pregnant in early 2015. Baby Rebecca was born prematurely in July last year but is now one very happy & healthy little girl who is providing the couple with much joy.

Andrea states that when she became pregnant, she was "thirsting" to learn of other amputee mothers first hand experiences of pregnancy but found it hard to obtain their personal views on pregnancy/motherhood. She has taken a year out from her career as a nurse at Ch-Ch Public in the AMAU ward but hopes to return in the near future. Andrea is also heavily involved as a volunteer youth leader with St Johns but is also taking time out from this role while she cares for Rebecca. She says that she loves doing things for other people and respects people involved with the Amputee Society for their commitment to serve others for no personal gain.

She says that dealing with her prolonged illness was a challenge but was astounded by the wonderful love, care and support she received from her family throughout this time as she acknowledges her task was easy compared to the journey her family had to endure. Andrea finds it hard being so far away from her family but was lucky enough to travel back to Wales late last year to "show off baby Rebecca" to her Welsh parents & family. She is counting the days till her parents make a return visit to NZ in April. Andrea said that she is happiest when the sun is shining, catching up with family and friends and simply spending time with Mike &

Rebecca. Achieving physical challenges that her prostheses restrict is one of the hardest things for her to deal with. Andrea has been able to travel extensively and apart from the UK, she has spent time in Australia, Fiji, Singapore, the USA & Canada.

Favourite food: Bangers and mash.

Favourite place: The Bay of Islands.

Favourite activities/hobbies: St Johns & Cross Stitch.

Favourite music: Pop genre but pretty much all types of music.

Favourite movie: "Forgetting Sarah Marshall"

Andrea became involved with Adaptive Rowing in the UK representing Wales in this sport and actually rowed with 2 people who went on to represent Great Britain at the Beijing Paralympics. She says the two greatest risks she has taken in her life was to skydive over the Remarkables and to actually become pregnant given all the unknowns associated with pregnancy & motherhood as an amputee.

Andrea, Mike & Rebecca currently reside in their own home in Redwood.