

Biography

Debbie Alves, a former international economist and advisor to governments, has returned to her first love as a writer and advocate. She's focusing on helping others learn from her experiences living with severe allergies and asthma, and now with Hyper Eosinophilic Syndrome and its complications. Additionally, she is developing a way for researchers and physicians to gain insights into the needs and difficulties of asthma and allergy patients as they navigate the world.

Debbie was born with severe allergies and developed asthma by 6 months. Her pediatrician told her mother at the time not to get too attached "she probably won't live to Christmas." But each time a crisis was reached, someone came up with an off-label use for a medication, or she simply refused to give up. It was more than a challenge – when she graduated from high school in 1974, they calculated she had been out an average of 2-3 days per week of every year of school. Despite that, she was one of the first college students exchanged by Nixon-Brezhnev to end the Cold War. Later, her work was sometimes hindered by her asthma, but as preventive medications gained traction, she benefited.

In 2012, her severe asthma, moderately controlled for several years, began worsening and her eosinophil levels began to rise much higher. 2013 was a crisis year, with five major asthma exacerbations and debilitating acute steroid myopathy. By 2014, she could no longer work – a devastating loss to one who was passionate about it.

Today she works with a team of specialists from George Washington University's Medical Faculty Associates in Washington DC. Her weeks are filled with the demands of managing 27 major medical conditions and all the research, appointments, constant testing and treatments involved. She's now on two cutting-edge biologic medications.

A native of San Antonio, Debbie lives in Washington DC. She received her BA in journalism from Trinity University in San Antonio, and her MA in international relations/international economics with a focus on social change and development policy from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. She eventually hopes to receive an honorary doctorate for contributions to weird medical knowledge from GW.