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Personal Reflections from ePortfolio: AHRC New York City

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My Personal Journey on the Project at AHRC New York City

by Kristina Grimmer

Me



My Biography - What I Am Bringing to AHRC New York City

I am a sophomore at Pace University. I am in the five year accounting program to obtain my BBA in accounting and MS in financial management along with a minor in quantitative business analysis. I am a peer leader for University 101 freshman seminar classes and also work in the library here at Pace. When I am home, I work at Forever 21 as a sales associate and occasionally working as a visual. I have volunteered at St. Charles Hospital, on Long Island, working with the nurses to organize files and paper work and also visited the patients to see if there was anything they needed. I have also volunteered at blood drives at my high school and a local farm called Bethel Hobbs Community Farm where I have planted crops and helped harvest crops. I am very involved on campus through my leadership role as secretary of Kappa Delta Sorority and a member of P.A.C.E. Board. I am also a member of two honor societies, Alpha Lambda Delta and Lambda Sigma.

boy was able to make the decision on his own to go to prom and to ask Ellen to be his date, despite thinking he didn't have friends. He then learned from this that he has a community and great family behind him, causing him to decide to go to prom. This is similar to the stories we heard at 156 William Street because Lisa spoke about how she now lives on her own and makes decisions on her own and has a job.

[Blog of 2/18/14](#)

Today we met with our AHRC New York City partner's. My partner is Evelyn. Although we were both a little shy, we learned a lot about each other and learned that we have a lot of similarities. Evelyn loves typing, singing, and dancing. She really enjoys hiphop dance and disco. I am a dancer so learning that she loves to dance was really exciting and something that we are hoping to incorporate into our project. I also found out that Evelyn is in a band! She plays the drums and the tamborine and also sings in the band. We spent a little bit of time going on youtube and just listening and singing along to some of Evelyn's favorite songs. I really enjoyed today's class and this was only day one with Evelyn. I'm really excited to see how we grow and learn more about each other. This class is such an amazing experience and I'm so excited to be apart of this.

[Critique of 2/18/14](#)

The article I chose is "iPads Helping Kids With Autism Learn to Speak". Although this article does not directly relate to my partner, it does show how these different technologies, specifically iPad apps, help people in different ways. This article describes how a study they had done shows how children up to the age of 8 can be significantly impacted by these communication apps on their iPad devices. They are encouraging kids to mimic the words that they hear from their device and it is in turn allowing kids to begin using short phrases as well. This, for some children, is a major improvement because some children are absolutely nonverbal and this not only gives them a voice but is in some cases allowing the children to even learn how to speak. My partner uses an iPad for recreational use. She enjoys listening to music on it and is learning how to use the iPad. So although it doesn't directly relate to my partner Evelyn, it does show that different technologies are helping individuals with disabilities.

<http://www.disabilitycoop.com/2013/11/19/ipads-autism-speak/18904/>

[Blog of 3/11/14](#)

Last week when I met with Evelyn. I told her to think of a book she would like to check out from the library this week. Evelyn wasn't able to think of one, so today when I got to class I helped her look one up. We spent about an hour discussing what kind of books she likes and trying to find ones that weren't too big but would interest her. I found out she really enjoys romance novels just like I do. She also likes mysteries as well as books about music. We eventually found a book about music that isn't too big that Evelyn would like to read. When we went to the library and found the book I took pictures and videos of Evelyn looking through the books to include in our project because reading is one of the things Evelyn loves! When we came back from the library I played some music on the computer and recorded videos of her singing as well for the project because Evelyn would really like to include her singing being that it is one of her passions.

[My Mid-Term Reflection Journal on \[Book\] Miracle Boy and on My Project](#)

The book "Miracle Boy Grows Up: How the Disability Rights Revolution Saved My Sanity," by Ben Mattlin, was very eye opening for me. Prior to this class, I had met a few individuals with mental disabilities. Although, I did not really have a clear understanding of how it affected their daily lives or how having this made them feel. So far this class, along with the book, has gave me a better understanding of these disabilities. These individuals

are just like everyone else, they just happen to live with something that is more difficult to overcome; and quite frankly, a lot of times they handle it better and can become more successful and satisfied with life than many of us without the disability.

Ben Mattlin's story told throughout the book is very inspirational to me. Most people born with spinal muscular atrophy do not live for very long but Mattlin managed to beat almost all odds. He became so successful and accomplished things that some people without disabilities cannot even accomplish. He has graduated from Harvard, got married, had children, and has a career writing and working for NPR. He was born in the same time period as when the growth of the disability rights movement had really begun. So as the years went on his life was opening up to more and more opportunities. He really lives a normal life, like everyone else; he just needs a little bit more assistance at times. The reality is that individuals with disabilities are just like everyone else and are able to take on the same everyday activities and tasks that other people do. These activities may be challenging but often times they accomplish them even better than someone who doesn't have disabilities.

One quote from the book that really stood out to me was, "Over time I learn to bury, or re-bury, my frustrations and fears. I will not let bumps and barriers make me fearful or reticent. Rather, I remind myself that hardships build character. They make me a stronger person. It's a guise I can maintain for only so long." (Mattlin, pg.7) This reminds me of the people that I have so far encountered at AHRC. Whether just the people that work there and told us about the program, or people that have gone to the program before speaking to our class about self-advocacy, or my actual partner for the project, Evelyn, everyone I feel has had this kind of outlook. Everyone we have met and spoken to has had such a positive outlook on their current lives and the future. I feel this also directly relates to the two women who spoke to my class when we visited AHRC. These women left me feeling so inspired when I left the classroom. People, who grow up with learning disabilities or mental disabilities, grow up with many obstacles to overcome. These two women described their challenges that they constantly have to deal with but then went straight to talking about how they've overcome them and how they've gone on to accomplish their goals and live everyday like everyone else. Self-advocacy is a big thing that these women were focusing on. They work with individuals who make this self-advocacy possible. They teach them how to be able to support themselves and live on their own. They learn how to travel around New York City by themselves by taking the subway and bus systems. They also learn how to gain skills necessary to obtain jobs. Self-advocacy groups are a big part of these disability rights movement that are really detrimental for these individuals to have because they really leave a great impact on these individuals lives. I remember one of the ladies mentioning how difficult her life was, and how she was left in a group home that didn't treat individuals well at all, and now she overcame that obstacle and got out of there and now she works for the senator of New York. It's really incredible how much of a turnaround she has had and the success she has had, even with her disability and she doesn't let it stop her. It is amazing to me how these individuals deal with these challenges, something I could've never dealt with, but handles it so well. They learn how to deal with the issues they have and how to overcome them. It can be tough on them, but now-a-days these individuals often have a great support system as well, whether from their families, or their support groups, that are able to guide them into the right direction and help them deal with their problems.

Evelyn and I have begun working on our project for this class and it is going well. Each week we work on adding to the video we are creating, along with getting to know each other better. In the beginning, I was a little worried because Evelyn was very quiet and seemed nervous so I was scared she wasn't going to open up to me at all or want to work with me. Every week though I notice she seems a little more open and each week we learn a little bit more about each other. Our project is going to consist of a video and some pictures of Evelyn and our progress in this class, along with capturing many of Evelyn's favorite things. So far we have captured videos of her singing, which is one of her passions, and a video of her in the library looking at different books, a picture of the book she checked out, and a picture of us with our favorite snack, which we

have in common, Nerds. I love working with Evelyn because not only am I learning more about her, I am also learning things about myself through this project. Prior to this class I have volunteered at a hospital which I really enjoyed. I got to speak with the patients daily, which really made their days and made them happy to have someone there with them for the time being. This reminds me of working with Evelyn. I feel like we both get really excited when we see each other and each time we have so much fun working together. This has made me realize how much I love to see other people smile, and be able to enjoy themselves, and become successful. Seeing Evelyn sing, and her telling me about band class, makes me happy because she is working towards something that she really enjoys to do. Something that other people may not be able to do, but luckily AHRC makes this possible for the individuals to be able to do different activities that they really enjoy. Working with Evelyn also reminds me of the book because Ben had to have an assistant with him many times to help him accomplish things, and although I am not serving as an assistant to help Evelyn, I think it is important to have someone to be able to speak to and share experiences with, to in turn be able to better yourself and grow as an individual.

To conclude, I truly am enjoying working on this project with my partner, Evelyn. It is really an eye opening experience for me. The book by Ben Mattlin was a great story and I really enjoyed reading it and being able to write this paper on it.

[Critique of 3/25/14](#)

I read the article and I found it truly inspiring. I think it was so great how Kevin Grow got the opportunity to fulfill his dreams by playing with the 'Sixers'. I feel like many times, individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities are not offered enough opportunities to do what they would like to do, even if they are fully capable. I love that the Sixers treated Kevin just as an individual who wanted to fulfill his dreams.

[Blog of 4/1/14](#)

Today, Evelyn and I worked on our project some more being that the time we have left is very short! We spoke with Julia and decided it would be a good idea to import our powerpoint into keynote on the iPad and get Evelyn familiar with how to work an iPad. So, that is what we did and now Evelyn will use the iPad to present the project. We also learned how to use iMovie today. I have never used iMovie before so it was actually a new experience for the both of us and we helped each other figure it out. We also added more to the video that we are creating for the powerpoint.

[Critique of 4/1/14](#)

I would first like to say that when reading the article, I found the statistics to be completely disheartening and it really bothered me that the crime rates for individuals with disabilities is so high. I think individuals with disabilities should have some service offered to them to learn how to deal with situations like these. It should be something that is practiced continuously to help them remember and better prepare them for situations like these as well. They also need to be taught to know when someone is acting in wrong ways towards them so they know when to speak up. Andrew Cuomo is one legislator in New York State who is advocating for individuals with disabilities. He has created the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, which works to lead these individuals to be able to fully participate in society, provide them with information to lead them to better decision making, and uphold their equality. This so far seems to be an effective part of the NYS Government and hopefully people become more aware of it.

[Critique of 4/8/14](#)

Discuss how the death of **Jerome Murdough** at **Rikers Island** in **New York City** might (or might not) be an apparent regression to the mentality evident from the period of **Willowbrook, Staten Island**

First off, I would like to say I find this so disheartening. I had read this article from the DailyNews, <http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/dailypolitics/corrections-boss-grilled-baking-death-inmate-jerome-murdough-rikers-blog-entry-1.1737213>. It broke my heart because they said how Jerome Murdough should not have been in Rikers Island to begin with. Yes, he trespassed, but it wasn't as severe as some other crimes. He is also schizophrenic as well as bipolar. Jerome Murdough had passed away while at Rikers Island due to extreme heat in his cell. The person in charge at Rikers Island never bothered to check on him and other cell mates as he was instructed to, which led to Jerome suffering and passing away. The prison also failed to let the mother of Jerome know that her son had passed away until almost a month after. I believe there is an apparent regression to the mentality evident from the period of Willowbrook. I think this is similar to cases at Willowbrook, Staten Island because these individuals with disabilities had been treated so poorly and you would think that now-a-days this type of treatment towards these individuals would not be occurring. It clearly still is evident though as we can tell from the case with Jerome. This is a serious problem that needs to be fixed.

[Critique of 4/29/14](#)

Mr. Herrera might be an inspiration for my AHRC New York City partner because Mr. Herrera shows that even if you have a disability, you are capable of doing anything. He is a strong individual who does what he loves to do and has been so successful. I think he could be an inspiration for my partner because it just shows that no matter what you have wrong with you, there are ways to overcome it and deal with it. So many people at Mr. Herrera's job are also so inspired by him. Whether you have a disability or not, Mr. Herrera is someone who can be an inspiration to you through his strength and hard work, and ability to deal with his disability.

[Blog of 5/6/14](#)

Today was the day we presented our projects to the rest of the class. The projects all turned out so well! I was very impressed by many of them! Evelyn was actually so eager to go today that when we didn't get called to go up until the very end, she began crying. She loved the class and project so much it made her upset to not get to share right away. Although, after we finally presented our project she was so happy and excited. Seeing these projects today was really eye opening for me. I realized just how much I loved this class and love volunteering with individuals with disabilities!

[Critique of 5/6/14](#)

I believe Mr. Richie Parker could definitely be an inspiration for my partner Evelyn. Watching this video inspired me so much and I think an individual with a disability could find it even more inspiring than I did. It is amazing to know that someone who we think would have such a difficult time completing certain tasks, could actually do them just as we can, many times even better than we can! Mr. Richie Parker even said himself, many people at his job first thought upon his arrival, "How is he going to do anything here?" and sure enough he does his job and better than some people!

My Final Reflection Journal on My Project

Working with AHRC NYC and being a student of CIS 102W has been an amazing experience, leaving me with memories that will last a lifetime. I feel as though there are many valuable lessons that individuals can learn from those with disabilities. I hope to further explain my experience in the following paragraphs.

I have had the pleasure of having Evelyn as my partner that I worked with from AHRCNYC this semester. I want to start off by saying that Evelyn is the sweetest woman and working with her has not only taught me a lot about her, but has also taught me a lot about myself as well. I could start out by saying all of the factual information that I know about Evelyn, but I would rather begin by saying all the things that I have noticed about Evelyn without her telling me about it. When I first met Evelyn I felt that this would be a hard class for me. I have never had much interaction with individuals that have disabilities; simply because I don't know anyone personally that has any. I soon realized, though, that Evelyn and I were a great match and that a lot could be learned during this experience. I began to realize that just like I do, she had things that she is extremely passionate about. I also realized that technology is a great way for individuals, like Evelyn, to be able to express themselves. Luckily, AHRC NYC gives Evelyn and the other people who attend the program, the ability to work on these passions and learn other things. It also gives them the ability to learn to be independent and do things that maybe they couldn't before, now by themselves. Evelyn has a passion for music and dancing, and thanks to her program, she is able to perform through her music class that she has. They put on performances very frequently and whenever I ask Evelyn how the performance was her face lights up when she talks about it. It is something that you can tell she loves to do, and this program is what gives her that ability to do what she loves and feel proud for accomplishing it.

I have learned a variety of things through this program. I have learned how much I love giving back to others. I have done community service in the past, and every time I have done it, I loved it. This time though, just reassured that. I loved working with Evelyn and being able to show her she has a friend. We had many similarities which made it even easier for us to bond. This class is meant to help these individuals with disabilities learn to use technology and be able to create a project that they are proud of and we are supposed to assist them. Though I feel my experience was the exact opposite. Evelyn was excited to see me every class, and I was just as excited to see her every class. She made me realize how lucky I am to be so privileged. Life as an individual who has disabilities can be difficult at times because there are many things that can set the individual back, but seeing Evelyn is so happy even through any set-backs she has, made me realize how grateful I am for everything that I have and taught me that I should be happy for everything that I have. I think it was also a great experience because being able to teach Evelyn to use an iPad was really awesome. We made the PowerPoint on my iPad and prior to this class she had never even used an iPad before. I showed her how to use PowerPoint and how to use the features such as adding pictures and adding music to videos. I would let her type up all of her own information that she wanted to include and just helped her on deciding what to say and how to spell the words. By the time of the last class, Evelyn then had learned how to use an iPad all on her own. She knew how to turn it on, how to search for items, and even learned to play some games that were already loaded on her iPad. It was incredible to watch her play these games because she put so much passion into them because it was something that she enjoyed.

This class was a great class and I feel as though I learned so many lessons through this class. I would definitely recommend this class to everyone. It has left me with great experiences that I really enjoyed.

My Certificate of Recognition of Service in the Semester

