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Personal Reflections from ePortfolio: AHRC New York City

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By Ashleigh Taylor

My Semester of Service at AHRC New York City

Me



About Me: Ashleigh Taylor

Hi! I am Ashleigh! I am an undergraduate student at Pace University, studying Communications & Arts & Entertainment Management. I am from southeastern Pennsylvania, where I reside with my very large family of seven siblings, and my two parents. I have a passion for experience and adventure. I love meeting new friends, and enriching my life by learning about the lives of others. I am bringing love, excitement, and the interest to learn and grow from my experience with AHRC. I am beyond excited to share my personable attitude, and outgoing personality with my new friend from AHRC. I absolutely love to be creative in any form whether it be artistic expression, city exploration, or technological. I see myself as fun and energetic, and I hope to fill this semester with all these qualities.

About Me



Believe Grow
Love Embrace
Adventure Immerself Learn
Nature
Moment Experience
Passion

About My AHRC Partner



Famous Models Exploring Food Happy Neighbors News Friends MTA
Baseball Brooklyn Bridge Grammys Brooklyn Dancing Party Friends Chicken
Google Relationships New York Celebrities Challenges Basketball Soccer
Breakfast Community Announcements I Heart Radio Katy Perry Playing
Celebrate Everything Birthdays Nightlife Hope Country Rice Adults Believe The Beatles
Puzzle Trains Adventures Lunch Travel Time Colors

My Project at AHRC New York City

Noel & I will be exploring the community around Pace University, taking trips to the gym, cafeteria, Brooklyn Bridge, potentially the Transit Museum, and a variety of other places in & around Pace. As a part of the project Noel will be filming on his iPad and so will I, and we will upload the videos to iMovie to create our project together.

Critique 2 2/4/14

Evaluate Diament, Michelle (2014), "Feds to Fund Tracking Devices for Kids with Autism" and "Senator Calls on Feds to Address Autism Wandering", www.disabilityscoop.com, January 30 and 28, as to how parents with teenagers with autism might (or might not) respond to the recommendation.

The articles posted by Michelle were highly interesting, and informative on legislation that advocates for the protection of individuals living with disabilities. The concept of a tracking device for teenager with autism is somewhat controversial.

Some parents may be inclined and motivated to push for this funding solely for the purpose of their child's safety. Other parent may be completely against the thought of tracking your child, almost like a package being sent throughout the day.

Most off all, I believe that most parents are now hopeful for future legislation and funding that can help their child with daily encounters. This proposed legislation by Senator Schumer, may be a vital aspect to educating society about the needs of individuals with autism.

Critique 4: 2/18

Please discuss an assistive communication device or speech technology tool that might allow individuals with disabilities to be musicians - please google the tools.

After researching a variety of assistive technology devices, I found The Soundbeam 2. This device is an ultrasonic beam that senses movement and responds by triggering a MIDI sound. A MIDI stands for Musical Instrument Digital Interface, which essentially connects a variety of musical sounds to interact with each other. The module connects to your MIDI device and with speakers it becomes an instrument operated by movement. The beam can be adjusted to see large movements such as a wheelchair moving across a room, or very small movements like an eyebrow. This device can be used for musical education purposes in classrooms. It works as an instrument for students with physical disabilities, and students with autism. Every person deserves the opportunity to express themselves musically. Technology has the power to change, inspire, and help the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Critique: 2/25/14

Survey Finds Just 1 In 3 With Intellectual Disabilities Employed

<http://www.disabilityscoop.com/2014/02/18/survey-intellectual-employed/19114/>

In the ever changing job market fierce competition for work exists. I was shocked after reading the article and learning that two-thirds of adults with disabilities are not in the workforce. Jobs belong to every human on this earth, and we all deserve equal opportunity to

obtain a job. Further government intervention is needed in times like these when the job market is limited for individuals with disabilities. It is hard to say how me and Noel could resolve this issue, but we could start off by finding out the specific skills he has, then focusing on the job type he may be interested in. We could take a step further, and research government aid, and workers rights for individuals with autism. After researching the how,where,&what, we can go ahead and apply for jobs as practice. There is a process for anyone looking for a job, and that is what must be taught to Noel. Even though he is only 16, he should learn the potential opportunities and benefits of having a job.

Critique: 3/4/14

Pace Birnbaum Library needs to implement a strategic plan that provides equal access to the second floor for students with disabilities in wheelchairs. It is unfair that the second floor is inaccessible, and re-construction is necessary. New elevators should immediately be constructed, or access from the previous elevators be allowed. How would you feel if your group decided to meet up stairs, but you couldn't make it? I think this ignoring of equal access to all students is in need of a petition. The Greek life, or office of community action & research, should be contacted about this issue, and asked if they would like to join in and advocate for reconstructions of the library. Also letters to the President & the Dean should be initiated by students to help change this unequal situation. Whether it is one person or five hundred people in a wheelchair, everyone deserves access to all parts of Pace University, and this is outright unfair.

Midterm Reflection Journal

The Reason I Jump, is a great read for all that will expand and enrich the lives of the reader. It has personally altered my perspective of individuals with autism. Prior to this book, I never really understood the daunting effects autism has on an individual's life. Throughout my life I have encountered and formed close friendships with individuals with disabilities, but I have never known what was going on in their mind; I neglected to focus on the deep inner-feelings of my friends, and often made assumptions about what they wanted, needed, thought, or felt. Naoki managed to convey vital information about the insecurities he and many others with autism face. He provided me with a new understanding that his insecurities are just in need of some patience. Everyone faces uncertainties in life, but we all respond in different ways, and for Naoki and other individuals with autism, these insecurities are much more frightening, and are in need of some empathy. It is time to walk in their shoes, and Naoki has helped me to focus on this. Throughout the semester I will continue to encourage within myself and others, a sense of compassion for my new friends at AHRC. He has not only

nourished my awareness of autism, but answered important questions, that allow me to delve deep down into the thoughts of my partner, Noel, at AHRC.

“I wrote this story in the hope that it will help you to understand how painful it is when you can’t express yourself to the people you love. If this story connects with your heart in some way, then I believe you’ll be able to connect back to the hearts of people with autism too (pg 112).

I learned a few important background lessons that have helped me to avoid uncomfortable (for the both of us) situations. For a while I never understood why Noel would jump back at the slight of my hand on his shoulder, or a single tap, but I learned that touching can convey a sense of control over his body, and may be uncomfortable (Higashida 32). Early in the semester I struggled to get immediate response from Noel, but Naoki taught me that he is not deliberately ignoring me, but rather not noticing the direction of my voice (Higashida 30). Often it helps to mention Noel’s name, and then begin asking my question. This has significantly helped in receiving responses from Noel.

Another important experience learned from Naoki is the response to “Why do you speak in that peculiar way?”. I noticed that Noel, has a different phonetic tone and longer pauses than I do. Naoki says that non-autistic people can sort out what they want to say when having conversation, but people with autism struggle to balance what they want to say over what they can say. Naoki explains that telling and thinking of a story is extremely difficult, and that’s where the drawn out words are formed and patience is much needed (Higashida 17). There are some of the most important lessons to be learned about being empathetic. I have learned not to talk down to Noel like he is less competent than me, because his mind is just as dynamic, creative, and filled with thoughts as mine is. Noel knows when you are not talking on his level, and he prefers to be treated equally.

Patience is a virtue, one that I often lack, but Naoki depicts the need for patience in such a way, that I myself have changed. My first impressions of Noel were quite biased, and I often marginalized what his true feelings may be. Noel told me about his basic interests of exploring, playing, basketball, pop-artists, The NYC Transit Museum, and his love for food, but I wasn’t connecting on level where he *truly* expressed himself. I never thought, *maybe I am being insensitive, by not thinking of his feelings*, until Naoki stressed the importance of never giving up on them (Higashida 22). After attending a few classes, and finishing the book through, I began to focus more on Noel as a friend, and how he feels as my partner at AHRC. I asked myself a variety of questions: *Is he comfortable with me? Are we connecting? Is he having fun? What can I do to get him to express himself to me?*

Our project topic is exploring the community around pace, and with an adventurous heart myself, I figured if I opened up and flourish my attitude into a happy, adventurous, and easy-going then maybe Noel will connect with me. By doing this, I learned that Noel is a loving human being, who cares for his friends *a lot*. He prefers hanging out and embracing the moment of two friends exploring around the neighborhood. He gets super excited when *I am* excited for our next adventure. If I don't put 110% of love into my surroundings, then Noel doesn't respond with the same amount of love for the moment. Noel really likes me as friend, and when I walk into the room he instantly greets me, and is ready for our next adventure. I believe that my outgoing and personable attitude connects with Noel's fun-spirited, and high-energy personality. Just these past two classes, Noel has began to express himself to me more. He doesn't sit quiet and wait for me to ask him questions, he just talks to me now. It warmed my heart when Noel was so eager to present our "introductions presentation" two weeks ago, because the two of worked on it together. I look forward to building a stronger connection with Noel, and paying more attention to his feelings. He loves filming, and embracing the moments of our adventure, so we have decided to compile a video of our semester experiences. I plan to have Noel learn a few features on I-Movie, and document all our experiences on his I-pad. I also hope to have him write a journal about a few of our experiences, and maybe narrate in the back of our movie. The next ten weeks of class, are moments that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Between my experience with Noel, and reading *The Reason I Jump*, my perceptions of how autism effects individuals has completely changed. I have found answers to questions, that I previously made biased assumptions about. I can now foster expression from Noel and help him to learn about the community around Pace, while having a genuinely fun and warm-spirited experience. I can also advocated and spread awareness about what I have learned. The words of Naoki Higashadi, and my experience with Noel are more priceless.

Works Cited

Higashida, Naoki, and Mitchell David. *The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a*

Thirteen-year-old Boy with Autism. New York, NY: Random House, 2003. Print.

Every individual deserves the right to access airports, with or without autism. The safety and security of airports are high priority, but the right for individuals with disabilities to be protected and transitioned into such experiences is all as important. The push for implementing facilities within airports for individuals with disabilities is on the rise, and more airports around the nation are providing accommodations. I researched the Metropolitan Topeka Airport of Kansas. If Noel and I were to travel via plane, I would hope that the Topeka Airport of Kansas would be patient, and assist me with the any issues or circumstances that might occur. Unfortunately after researching the website for accommodations, and calling the airline, I was informed that there are no particular facilities or accommodations involved with this airport. The best accommodation for individuals with disabilities is early boarding. Is early boarding enough? What about the process of TSA and Security checks? I think that legislation should be passed to approve at all airports a line for individuals with disabilities and their family. This line should be dedicated to these individuals with a transitioning process, and trained staff who are familiar with the potential issues that may occur.

[Critique 4/1/2014](#)

The characteristics of Owen, in *Animating Owen*, featured in the New York Times, are very similar to that of other individuals living with autism. It is common for autism to develop in the early stages of life, just as it did for Owen. Sadly, Owen was very active and healthy his first three years of life, and when the autism developed Owen fell silent. This is common for individuals with autism. Owen would flap his hand in front of his eyes, and say the same word over and over again. Sometimes, the word he was saying is just a mere figment of his memory, which is also common. Owen often retained the lines of his favorite movies, and would repeat lines, as a conversation. Sometimes little things stick in the back of the memory, and an individual with autism can retrieve what is most prominent, in their memory, like their favorite movie. As for the Disney therapy, this may not be as common for every individual with autism. Owen had a special connection with Disney characters, just as someone else with autism may have a special connection with trains, or cars. Overall, Owen is a wonderful human being, who developed autism, and some of his characteristics are common, where others are still questioned.

[Critique 4/8/14](#)

The American Museum of Natural History, in my opinion, is not very autism-friendly. The museum, is interactive, engaging, and informative, but on there were no accommodations for those with autism. I did not see any entrances for individuals with disabilities. A autism-friendly map would be helpful for the students who want to navigate without assistance. I also think an option for autism-friendly audio visual tours would be awesome. After doing some research, it seems the main concern is that the planetarium is excessively loud, and this sometimes disturbs individuals with autism (loud pitches or sounds). One mother suggested, a special time for individuals with autism, where the sound is lowered. Although the museum is not autism-friendly everyday, there are programs that exist. The Museum Access Consortium is a citywide

membership based organization comprised of individuals from cultural institutions and disability communities working to either to advance accessibility. MAC, has recently started the Autism-Friendly Cultural Programs Public Fair. This event is aimed to create a safe space for youth and adults on the autism spectrum, and their families to congregate, meet museum and cultural institution professionals, and learn about the multitude of autism-friendly programs and offerings in New York City (eventbrite.com). The American Museum of Natural History is featured on this programs list. So, although the museum does not have many autism-friendly services, they do participate in cultural programs to help the autism community.

Critique 4/22/14

I do not believe that the article assigned for homework is an adequate explanation of often biased perceptions of individuals with out disabilities about individuals with disabilities. Although I do believe in the power of the subconscious, and the things it may hold, I do not think that biased perceptions are always held in the subconscious. A human has control over some of their instantaneous thoughts. It is called being humble, and ignoring those biased perceptions. Once a human is capable of learning the power of empathy they are able of eliminating many of those biased perceptions. All it takes is a few experiences for you to realize that your subconscious cannot control every thought. Maybe I am wrong, but these are my own personal beliefs of our subconscious. Biased perceptions are, in my own opinion, influenced by surroundings, but also based on ones own experience, and once a new experience is brought into life, then that human has the ability to create to perceptions.

Critique 4/29/14

First off, I am upset with the new changes Disney has implemented to accommodate individuals with disabilities. I have a friend with down syndrome, and we have visited Disney with him. I could not imagine the burden this new disability access card would cause. So I researched Six Flags Great Adventures only to find out they have the same regulations and accommodations for individuals with disabilities. They provide alternative access to attractions, with the use of a Rider Access Pass. This alternative access allows for only up to 3 family members, and is not used to skip lines, but rather make a reservation. Even more, the pamphlet on disability accommodation does not mention intellectual disabilities, it solely says "Alternative access is intended to accommodate guests with mobility aides and service animals and not to bypass others waiting in line". No other information is available on accommodations for individuals with intellectual disabilities, but after reading other articles on the internet it seems that parents have revived these passes for children with autism. I am disappointed with Six Flags. According to a recent USA Today article, this change in policy has been across the board at over a dozen theme parks run by Cedar Fair Entertainment. They should have just changed the amount of family members allowed to enter in the alternative entrance rather than now having designated reserved times. This is absurd!

Today I attended the Pace University Disabilities Film Festival. I absolutely loved the entire event! The guests on the discussion panel were insightful, and very determined to spread the awareness of advocating for individuals with disabilities. My favorite film was *Miss You Can Do It*. I was crying tears of joy throughout the entire piece. Although the discussion panel was not as fond of the film, because of American culture placing expectations amongst young females, but I loved it because deep down inside many girls want to be a beauty queen. I also was very taken back by the short piece called *The Commute*. This was the most concerning, and thought provoking piece of the entire festival because not only did it provide knowledge of the minimal accessible subways in NYC boroughs, but it also shared the personal struggle of the individual it focused on. I felt his sadness, everytime he reached another set of steps, and was another minute late to his daughters birthday. It provides a perception through his eye, how he feels about the less accessible areas in New York. The importance of accessibility is not widely heard about, but with more and more advocates our community is finding ways to pass legislation that requires most places to be accessible. My other favorite film was the one about the *Breadmakers* based in Scotland. It was heart-warming to see the dedication this business had to its employees. Each employee was a man/women of his/her own. Everyone had a job, and a task, and it seemed each task was completed with love. The movie provoked thought on the right of every individual to obtain a job whether they are intellectually disabled or not. I am glad I experienced the festival, and even more happy that I spoke with Yulyia from AHRC about an internship :)

Critique 5/6/14

Kids' Autism Care Runs \$11.5 Billion Annually, Study Finds

I do not know if I would confront the issues of the medical costs for ASD. I do know that if I had a brother or sister with ASD, I would petition, and form an organization to help avoid these extra costs at schools. I would love to one day start my own organization that provides affordable child care, and extra educational services for individuals with autism. The extra time spent to help educate individuals with autism should not come at any families expense. These costs should be built into tax payer dollars, just social security and other taxes for welfare are built in. If we can help the less fortunate families with low incomes, why can't we help individuals with autism or other intellectual disabilities. Medical care is a whole different conversation that involves private practice, and although I think every deserves free-health care, it is a lengthy, and touchy subject to expand. Basically, I do believe that in America today, without free-healthcare, and only individualized plans, a family raising a child with autism is responsible for the expenses of their child, even if these expenses are 3,000 dollars more than the average child. As for the education sector of this nation, everyone deserves the right for a proper education, even if that mean extra time, and focus on one child. I personally, grew up with developmental issues, that placed me behind the students in my class. I had delayed speech struggles, and was provided with the extra personal individualized attention I needed. Everyone

public and private school should, NEVER charge for educational services. Even outside school programs should never charge. There should be countless non-profits to help combat this world of money hungry institutions. Whatever happened to the LOVE? A buck or five-hundred for individualized educational services? That is ridiculous! If this was my brother or sister, I would take the time and energy, spread my love for them, by teaching them myself, and demanding my parents to engage in home-educational schooling. Parents can learn to provide themselves, these extra educational services. Just an extra hour a day would help, if the school is not offering. But first if the school is offering services for FREE then use those. It is your child, your brother, your sister; they deserve the time and energy.

[Blog 5/6/14](#)

Today was our last day with our partners, and I am sooooo sad! I am going to miss this class so much. Noel and I finished up our "Exploring Pace University" video, and we added our final touches. I was so proud of Noel, because he was so engaged in the project today. He really enjoyed watching himself on camera, and recording the voice overs about his trips. I truly feel Noel has learned some things from me, about being yourself, and enthusiastic about life, while embracing your surroundings. He always remembers every detail of our class adventures. I forgot what year the library was built (some information we learned from the Pace librarian), and Noel remembered the exact year of 1967 it was constructed, and then 1970 it was opened. He really enjoyed the library trip, but not as much as the South Street Seaport. He kept reminiscing on the fun times we had at the Seaport today. He was giggling, and laughing with me, pointing out in the video what he remembered, and what he enjoyed. His full engagement and attention to the project, was necessary today considering the deadline for the project. I am happy we completed, and finalized our video. I will be spending time with Noel, and the other students at their school in Bayridge tomorrow, and I am excited to observe and learn about their educational opportunities. So today wasn't a final goodbye, but I am still sad because this class has a huge place in my heart, and spending time learning from, and with the students has been a wonderful experience.

[Visiting AHRC Middle/High School in Bay Ridge](#)

Yesterday I had the opportunity to visit the AHRC Middle/School in Bay Ridge, and follow around Noel throughout his morning/afternoon. I have to say this was my favorite experience of all semester. Observing Noel in class, and how he engages and interacts provided me with a sense of enlightenment and understanding. I will admit, I had a biased perceptions of Noel's attention, functional, and planning skills, but as I followed him I learned how intelligent, and responsive Noel is. I followed Noel through gym class, math class, and lunch. In gym, he was fully immersed in his workout, moving back and forth from the treadmill, situps, and boxing. In math Noel was very focused on his assignment of short division, and all his answers were right. At lunch Noel interacted just as any other student would with their friends. It was also very interesting to see the other assignments Noel has completed (they were hung up around the classroom). I stumbled upon a reading and comprehension assignment, and I was *not* at all surprised that Noel's had a perfect, clear thesis, and full responses to the questions. I noticed mid-semester that Noel has amazing writing skills, and he retains a lot of information you throw at him; it just sometimes takes a moment to pry it out of him, but it is there. Noel is such a kind-hearted, high-spirited, and very attentive individual, and I would have never known this, if I did

not take the time to get to know him. I am so glad I met Noel this semester, because it has taught me never to pass judgement on someone you do not know. It has also taught me that there are many common misconceptions of individuals with autism, and what one usually judges about this person is wrong.

Furthermore, I learned about the structure of AHRC Middle/Highschool, and how the curriculum works. Noel is in the middle school, in class with about 8 other students, and he has one teacher for his main education courses. He sees other teachers for certain non-focus courses like gym/art. They have a life skills course, where the students are taught important day to day things. They are in the program all year long. It is just like a regular school, with math quizzes, gym exercise, and lunch time. The teachers all have degrees, and every other employee has some type of certification. The school, also has highschool, and after high school (18-21). Overall, it was a very enriching experience that has made me feel extremely proud of AHRC for the services they provide. It is sometimes a sad thought when one realizes that not every state, every city, every town, every family, and every individual has access to programs and schools like AHRC. I only hope for the continual expansion of programs and services for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Final Reflection Journal

Throughout the semester I have had the opportunity to provide service to AHRC New York, by interacting with, and supporting my partner Noel, with his *Exploring the Community Around Pace* project. I have not only learned from a meaningful amount of experience, but I have also enriched my life, and Noel's life through participation, communication, and commitment. I can now reflect on what I have learned, how I have helped Noel and AHRC, and how I can share and encourage others to join in the advocacy for individuals with disabilities.

Indeed, this semester has been a journey of friendship, mentorship, and personal growth. I can honestly say that I have developed a sense of empathy for Noel, the students and adults of AHRC, and every other individual in this world living with a disability. I have learned that the many common misconceptions people without disabilities hold are often wrong. I personally, have held many of these misunderstandings, and now I have learned to avoid these biases, and have realized that Noel, and others with autism, are very much like me: a student living day by day, experiencing the reality of life which is filled with thousands of stimuli, emotions, and interaction. In fact, it is often thought that individuals with autism are unwilling to form meaningful social relationships, and after this semester I have been proven wrong!

Notably, I always thought people with autism were socially awkward, and this is not the case of Noel, and many others from my class. Since day one Noel has been nothing but open with me. He never seemed indifferent, or distant, rather he was *always* excited when I entered the room quickly walking towards me with eagerness. He would greet me instantly, and give me a handshake or flash a great big smiling saying "Hi Ashleigh". The moment I spoke with Noel, he instantly responded, again always with a smile. If I gave Noel my full attention, he would contribute back to the conversation with his full attention. A positive attitude, stimulating adventure, and a happy mind were all it took to keep him involved in our daily activities.

Regarding these misconceptions, it is also frequently thought that autistic people can't *do* much of anything, and that one shouldn't expect much of them. This is *so* untrue! They are humans to, with endless capabilities, and many interests! Sometimes, it just takes someone to believe in them, guide them, and help them with their dreams. Noel, was absolutely engaged in our daily activities, and I often relied on him to help film some of our video. Noel is the voice behind his project, he chose some of the places we went to, and had ideas for where he would like to visit (unfortunately we did not get to go everywhere he wanted like the Transit Museum). He discussed, and recorded what he learned, or experienced from our community adventures. Noel, can remember, think, talk, take responsibility, and have fun; this is *doing* things. Yet again, another common misconception has been proved, and I have learned that not every bias about autism is right. More importantly, the way individuals with disabilities are treated and cared for by society is often ignored, and only recently are increasing initiatives on the rise.

I have learned a great deal about the lack of national awareness on disabilities, and the great struggle it poses for many individuals and families. It seems that awareness is finally beginning to expand as state, local, and federal initiatives are changing the way they care for individuals with autism, and other disabilities. Insurance companies are changing their policies, and covering autism therapies. The push for implementing facilities within airports for individuals with disabilities is on the rise, and more airports and other transportation services around the nation are providing accommodations, but at the same there is a great lack of accommodation. Programs like AHRC, and The ARC, are developing all around the nation helping people with disabilities to receive proper educational, medical, and life attention. However, there still exists the discouraging amount inattentive, unaware, non-accommodating facilities, institutions, and public places.

Places like Pace University, are an example of a great contradiction. They accommodate individuals with autism by providing note-takers, mentors, and even a whole department aimed to help individuals with disabilities. I personally am a note-taker for a fellow student who has autism. Yet, there accommodations are not fully equipped for individuals with physical disabilities, because their elevator in the library will stop providing access to the second floor. Other places like amusement parks are “downgrading” their services and making it harder for families to access rides. The subway systems in NYC have about only sixty or so accessible tracks, out of whopping four hundred and thirty or so subways. Even sadder is that about only half the accessible tracks are operating. There is a constant combat to end the inequality between individuals with disabilities, and individuals without disabilities, and this semester I have learned about these problems that many individuals with disabilities face on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, beyond learning from my experience with AHRC, I have also helped a great deal, and provided service to AHRC, and Noel. I have helped to enhance the daily life experience for Noel, by educating him on the process of making a movie. I have become his friend, and helped him to open up to me. I introduced him to new places, and assisted him in learning the history of things like our library. I have fostered communication between us, and other people around Pace University. Teaching him to embrace his surroundings, and immerse himself in the moment, has cultivated his eagerness to explore. From the Seaport, to the Pace Library, and the Natural History Museum, Noel has experienced different environments. These environments have been faced through a different perspective, *my perspective* and *understanding* of this world that I shared with him. He has enriched my life, and I have enriched his.

Above all, this semester has cultivated awareness within me that I am now ready to share with others. I already enjoy sharing my stories about Noel and AHRC with friends and family. I learned a great deal from Noel, and this course, and I will continue to recommend it to everyone I know at Pace. Noel has become my friend, and I will miss his smile and contagious happiness a lot. I only wish the best for him and his family. Noel is a bright student, with eagerness to explore, and with a little help his dreams can come true. Through this new outlook on disabilities I am motivated to become more involved either by participating in further public service, voting for candidates who advocate for individuals with disabilities, or signing online petitions. Anyway I can, I will become more involved, because this semester has changed my perspective on autism, and other disabilities. I now see the constant struggle that these individuals face, and it is not fair. Everyone deserves the right to pursue their dreams, and without awareness these dreams are put on hold. With love, the power of the voice, and a strong determination anyone can help to combat the inequalities faced by people living with disabilities. Sometimes being aware and changing the lives of these individuals is as simple as being a friend, and *being* there for them like I was to Noel.

Blog 5/13/14

Today we had our final presentations at 83 Maiden Lane. Many of the staff members and parents of AHRC students attended the presentations. Noel and I presented last, but the whole time I noticed he was extremely eager to present. He was smiling, and kept looking back at me, excited to present. As for our actual presentations, Noel seemed to be nervous, and rushed through the questions I asked him. Considering we only had a video, I do not have much to discuss in

detail. I would rather, reflect on the process of our presentation. It was fun exploring the community around Pace, and videoing the entire experience. I was so proud that Noel, had the confidence to narrate the movie with his reflection on the different locations we visited. Noel enjoys listening to himself, and this is really cool. I have often told him to be confident and enthusiastic when he is talking, and I have notice a significant change since day one. Noel is kind-hearted, adventerous, and very intelligent. I am glad I had the opportunity to get to know him this semester. I hope his mother enjoyed the presentation!

Certificate of Service

