



Kids As Self Advocates

I wanted to go to college and my dream came true

by Micah Fialka-Feldman

I wanted to go to college and my dream came true. Here's what happened.

I always wanted to be with my friends. When I was in first grade I was in a special classroom. It was okay but I wanted to be with my friends so I told my mom and dad that I wanted to go into the same door at school that all the other kids were going in. They helped me do that.

Then when I got older I started thinking about what college I wanted to go to. My friends wanted to go to college and I wanted to do the same thing. Since I was little I've been going to the University of Michigan football games with my Papa. I learned about college from going to the games and seeing the kids have a good time. They looked happy. I have always been included in regular classes so I wanted to stay in regular classes after high school. When I was in sixth grade I had a MAP (Making Action Plans). My friends, teachers, and parents helped me think about my dreams for my future. One of my friends said that I would go to college. I liked hearing that because that was my dream.

I want to work in politics, maybe in government or at our state capital. I also like current events and I like to do public speaking at conferences, universities, and other places. I tell people about inclusion, disability rights and self advocacy. I can learn about these things in college and be with my peers. I didn't want to go to a segregated program after high school.

My parents learned about a college program for kids with cognitive impairments at Eastern Michigan University. I visited the program with some of my teachers, my parents and Michele Harmala from Oakland Schools. I liked it a lot and thought it was a cool program for kids with disabilities who wanted to learn on campus and be with their peers. The teacher was John Rose. He was cool and funny.

Then we went back to my school and had LOTS and LOTS of meetings. Many people started having the same dream that I had about going to college, so they helped me.

Visit Kids As Self Advocates on the web at: www.fvkasa.org

KASA is a project of FAMILY VOICES[®] 2340 Alamo SE, Suite 102, Albuquerque, NM 87106
Ph: 1-888-835-5669 Fax: 505-872-4780 Email: info@fvkasa.org



Kids As Self Advocates

My high school and my parents helped me get ready for college. They helped me learn a lot about computers, using a palm pilot, running my meetings, being in clubs, and learning how to be a self advocate. I know how to use the computer to write my papers. I can do look up information on the internet and I can use a program that reads everything to me. I also learned to talk into the computer and then it writes what I say. It is called Dragon Speak. My best teacher in high school was Ms. Berke. She helped me learn more about using the computer. She also helped me plan before every one of my meetings so I knew what I wanted to say. I learned how to tell my teachers what I wanted. Ms. Berke listened to me and helped me get my dream. She was the best! During high school, I also attended the Michigan Youth Leadership Forum and the National Youth Leadership Forum which helped me learn about my rights. I am a member of a Board Member of national youth advocacy group called Kids As Self Advocates (www.fvkasa.org). I learned a lot from these groups. They helped me to feel proud.

Two days after my 19th birthday, I starting going to Oakland University in Michigan. That was one of my best birthday gifts. A lot of people didn't think that it could happen but my team believed in my dream. I learned how to take public busses to get to the college campus. I learned how to post flyers at the university so I got someone to drive me to school on some of the days. My new teacher, Suzanne James is helping me find good classes to sit in on at Oakland University. She is working hard. Next semester I am planning to sit in a speech class, a political science class, and a social problems class. I think I will learn a lot. I volunteer at the child care center on the campus. I am also in the social work club and Hillel, which is a Jewish organization. I am learning how to be a leader and how to do community service. I know my way around the campus and I have lunch with friends. I like being a college student. I think I will learn a lot. I am proud to tell people that I am a college student. I am happy. My dream came true.

(This article will be published in a forthcoming book to be published by The National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports [NIDRR], University of Hawaii. Please contact the author, Micah Fialka-Feldman for permission to reproduce this article.)

Visit Kids As Self Advocates on the web at: www.fvkasa.org

KASA is a project of FAMILY VOICES[®] 2340 Alamo SE, Suite 102, Albuquerque, NM 87106
Ph: 1-888-835-5669 Fax: 505-872-4780 Email: info@fvkasa.org