

## **How to connect people with disabilities to the community?**

From my research and my experience with Sam, my brother who has a disability, I would like to share some tips with you on how maybe you can help connect a family member or friend who has a disability. I know I might not be a reliable source to tell you how you should raise or help out your friend or family member, but I think that these tips can really help you out.

1. **Observe what your family member or friend who has a disability likes to do.** Be on a lookout on what their passion might be and also ask them what they like to do. For example, my brother Sam likes movies, especially The Simpsons. So my family and I thought that it would be a good idea to put him in a movie class with the Highland Friendship Club. Sam always enjoys dressing up (except he won't wear a fake beard.) and being outside. When the premiere of the movie comes around, he loves to see himself and his brothers on the big screen.
2. **Make sure they are doing something during the day.** During my research, families get confused on what to do with someone who has a disability. Look up organizations for people with disabilities and get them connected to them. Some good organizations that you can use are the Highland Friendship Club, Upstream Arts (if they want to be an actor), and Lifeworks. Also, look for schools in your area that specializes in people with disabilities. For example, there is a school in St. Paul called Bridge View that specializes in people who have disabilities and they do an amazing job there. My brother Sam went to that school and he had a great time there.

3. **Try to get them involved in something new.** For example there are recreation leagues like basketball and flag football at recreation centers that let people with disabilities play. Try to get them involved in something that they might not have even tried to do or thought of even trying. Maybe they will like the activity and they will want to keep trying it which will connect them to the community.

### **Web site link**

Below are some links to the organizations that I researched and I thought that these links can be useful to help a family member or friend who has a disability.

<http://www.highlandfriendshipclub.org>

<https://www.upstreamarts.org>

<http://www.lifeworks.org>

<http://mnccd.org>

<http://www.thearc.org>

## **Facts**

According to the U.S Census, about 5.3% of 15 to 24 year olds have a severe disability.

Additionally, 1.4% of 15 to 24 year olds need assistance because of their disabilities.

According to Disabled World, about 74.6 million people in the U.S have some kind of disabilities

## **Email**

If you have any questions about my research or want to know more about how to connect people with disabilities to their communities here is my email!

**slagotommy@gmail.com**

## **What is BAP?**

Hello everyone! My name is Tommy Slagerman and I am a senior from Cretin-Derham Hall in St. Paul, Minnesota. What you are reading right now is my BAP solution where my goal is to show you what I learned from my project and to hopefully help you if you have a family member, or a friend that has a disability and connect them to their community. BAP (Big Action Project) is an assignment that was given to my Spectrum class all the way back in early November. The goal of the project is to find a problem in our communities that is struggling to find justice and try to find a solution to the problem. BAP is divided up into three phases. The first phase is to come up with a problem in the community and present your problem to the class.

The second phase is where all of the research comes into play. We must conduct two interviews on people who are active and advocates for your problem. Next, we had to go to an event that relates to our problem and just soak in what was happening around us. Finally, we had to present a status update to our class which included our two interviews, our event and an image that shows what we done so far for our project. The last phase is our solution. We must come up with a solution (you're reading mine right now) and then present them in front of a panel of one Spectrum teacher, one Cretin-Derham Hall teacher and one parent. Everyone in our school is invited to come and watch our BAP presentation so this project is a big deal.

My plan for this document is to answer questions that were given to our class that we must answer during our presentation in depth and I would also like to give you ideas and solutions on how you can connect someone who has a disability to their community. Without further ado, Here is my BAP solution!

### **What was the problem you identified and why did you chose it?**

The problem I identified was how do we connect people with mental and physical disabilities to the community. The main reason I chose it was because I have an older brother named Sam who has physical and mental disabilities. I grew up with Sam and I got used to being around him since I was around him every single day and for people who don't know Sam, they can be a little scared and intimidated by him. Sam has had a lot of health problems in his lifetime. When he was born, he immediately had a heart problem and they need to operate on him to save him. As

long as I can remember, Sam always needed surgeries done on him and I can expect to see Sam in a hospital bed two to three times a year and most people won't have two to three surgeries in their lifetime. One time, when I was a third grader, I spent my Christmas in the hospital because Sam had a surgery and it was over the holidays and Sam stayed in the hospital longer than expected. This was the first time that Sam couldn't walk and since that Christmas, he has never walked. So what does my brother Sam have to do with my BAP problem? Because Sam can't walk and function independently like you and I can, Sam can't hold a job or do anything and there wasn't a lot of options for him to connect to the community. I decided to tackle this problem because I wanted to see if there was services out there that could connect Sam to the community as well as to help others who have friends and family members who have a disability and help them connect to the community.

### **Why did you choose your solution?**

The reason I chose this as my solution is because I know that the Internet is a powerful thing. My plan is to send this web document to services and organizations that I came across during my research and have them post this web document on their website. I will also have them share this on Facebook so more people can see it and share it with people they know who have a disability.

### **How will you measure the success of your solution?**

The way I'm going to measure my success of this solution is by how many people share this web document on Facebook, if the organization are willing to help me promote this web document and lastly I'm going to put my email on the document and see if anyone sends me feedback or asks me more questions about my project.

### **What questions drove your research?**

Was there any organizations and services available for people with disabilities in the Twin Cities?

Was money an issue for people with disabilities that they can't connect to the community?

How many members does an organization for people with disabilities serve?

Are there people out in the Twin Cities who advocate for people with disabilities?

What's the main reason why people with disabilities don't connect to the community?

### **What resources did you use for your research?**

The resources I used for my research was the Highland Friendship Club, Upstream Art, LifeWorks and Consortium for citizens with disabilities. I was able to get interviews from them and I was able to go to an event with Lifeworks.

### **Who did you interview?**

I interviewed Pat Leseman who is on the board of directors and she is the co-founder of the Highland Friendship Club. I also interviewed Julie Guidry who is the Executive a Director and teaching artist at Upstream Arts.

## **What further question arose from your research?**

Can my brother Sam use any of these organizations to help him connect to the community?

Can these services help someone who has a disability and never connected to the community before connect them to the community?

Are there more organizations in the Twin Cities that help connect people with disabilities to their community?

## **BAP Status Update**

Below is my status update that I presented to my class. I'm putting the status update in here because it has my two interviews in it and my event and it will show you what kind of work I put into this project. I'm also putting my status update in is because I think it will be beneficial for people who want to connect a friend or family member who has a disability and you can read my firsthand experience I had with these organizations. So please, enjoy my status update!

Tommy Slagerman

Mrs. Cornett

C101 Spectrum Period 3/4

9 March 2016

Phase 2/ Status Update

Interview 1: Pat Leseman

Question 1: What is the Highland Friendship Club?

Answer 1: The Highland Friendship Club is a 501c3 non-profit organization that provides experience and activities for young adults to get them connected to the community.

Question 2: How was it started?

Answer 2: It started out with Pat Leseman and Rosemary Fagrelus' sons, John and Mike who both had disabilities. They were at their brother's sports banquet and John asked Rosemary, "when am I getting a banquet?" Pat and Rosemary realized that John and Mike never had anything for themselves and they always hung out with their parents and brothers. So one day, Pat and Rosemary decided to start an event called Hillcrest Fun Night where John and Mike could invite their friends and play basketball and sing karaoke and do other fun stuff. They would do Hillcrest Fun Night two times a month and each time they did it, the group got bigger and bigger until it became the Highland Friendship Club.

Question 3: How does the Highland Friendship Club connect the members to the community?



Answer 3: They will go to different programs like Cretin-Derham Hall or Feed My Starving Children and ask them if HFC can do anything with them. If the program works for HFC, then they will build a relationship with the program and continue to work with them.

Question 4: What is the average social class of members?

Answer 4: Without their parents, 80% of the young adults are below the poverty line. With the parents, 60% of the members are in the lower class, 30% are in the middle class and 10% are in upper class. The Highland Friendship Club provides scholarships to members who may not be able to pay for the activities.

Question 5: Are there other outlets for young adults with disabilities in the Twin Cities?

Answer 5: They are the only club for young adult in the Twin Cities, but there are city rec centers for the young adults, but they don't suit their needs.

Bio: Pat Leseman is on the board of directors and the Co-Founder of the Highland Friendship Club. Pat is also a Highland Friendship Club parent.

I interviewed Pat Leseman on February 23 2016. Pat has an office in the brother's residents at school so it wasn't too far to go to. The interview lasted about 45 minutes and we talked the whole time about young adults in the community.

#### Interview 2: Julie Guidry

Question 1: What is Upstream Arts?

Answer 1: Upstream Arts is a place where young adults can learn about visual arts and performing arts.

Question 2: How was it started

Answer 2: Upstream Arts was started in 2006 when Julie had a son who has disabilities and he didn't talk or communicate very well. Julie was a teaching artist along with her husband Matt Guidry, so she thought that art was a great way to develop communication for people with disabilities.

Question 3: How does Upstream Arts connect its members to the community?

Answer 3: They go to schools and programs and they work with the community that needs them. It's a 12 week program and the classes are 1 hour a week and classes are less when they are working with younger kids with disabilities.

Question 4: Are there any fees for the classes?

Answer 4: The fees for the class are based on what classes you want to take and if the member can't pay, they will offer scholarships.

Question 5: How many people with disabilities have Upstream Arts served?

Answer 5: Upstream Arts have served 3,000 people on an annual basis.

Bio: Julie Guidry is the Executive Director of Upstream Arts, Co-Founder of Upstream Arts and she is a teaching artist.

I found out about Upstream Arts after my interview with Pat Leseman when she suggested that I talk to Julie for my interview. I was only able to get a phone interview with Julie on March 3 2016. The interview lasted for 30 minutes because Julie had a busy schedule that day and she was nice enough to put my interview into her busy schedule.

#### Event

I went to Lifeworks in Eagan on March 22nd. Lifeworks wanted me to come with them to the capital and help out with the members by talking to them and just being a friend. We got on the

bus and I was seated next to a member and we started to talk. He told me that he was excited about the Twins baseball season and he hopes that the Twins baseball season would be better than last season. He also wanted to know how I could grow a beard as an eighteen year old which I thought it was funny and he started to laugh when I told him the answer. We got to the capital and we were attending a rally to promote a reform to help Minnesota residents with disabilities get money and have them receive more money to help them with their basic needs. We made poster boards and tweets for Twitter to help promote the reform. I enjoyed my time with Lifeworks and they help me open my eyes on how to connect people with disabilities to their communities

**STATUS UPDATE**

  
**PAT LESEMAN**

  
**JULIE GUIDRY**

**RALLY**



  
**HIGHLAND FRIENDSHIP CLUB**

  
**UPSTREAM ARTS**  
Moving Against The Current

  
**Lifeworks**

