

Brieta is a longstanding member of The Arc of Weld County and until the pandemic, was a weekly office volunteer. She has been involved with our agency for many years and the transition to a more virtual community changed much of that for her and everyone around her. Although she spends most weekends visiting her large extended family, she does live independently and was very accustomed to seeing her friends and fellow community members in-person daily. Post March 2020, Brieta's volunteerism ended, as our physical offices were closed and remain so, and her residential and day program services were disrupted. Although there have been improvements for both needs now, virtual community engagement continues to be a new staple in Brieta's life and likely for the foreseeable future.

This year Brieta received a Chromebook through The Arc of Weld County's Inclusive Technology Access Fund. The device has made her participation in Check-in with Friends, our chapter's virtual self-advocacy group, so much easier than when she participated via her parents' older computer. Now Brieta does not have to travel to her parents' house, who do not reside in the same city as she does and can visit with her friends virtually when the group meets and on her own. This will be even more advantageous as the seasons change and winter arrives, compromising travel on occasion.

As Brieta has become accustomed to using technology more regularly, she was interested in learning even more. Brieta was one of our agency's Code Ninjas music coding participants. Although she was highly independent in following along with the instructor's guidance, this was her first time using a laptop. "I did not know you could do that kind of stuff with a computer." Brieta enjoyed creating music through coding and to top it off, she even recorded her experiences on her smartphone. The coding classes allowed Brieta access to a new opportunity that she maintains today, as the coding platform used is available online and via her account, she continues to code music, share it and see her independent progress as her skills advance.

Prior to the tech coaching, Brieta had some skills in technology per the use of her parents' personal device, however, her parents would always set up the computer for her, including virtual engagement. However, the coaching provided Brieta opportunities to learn skills to be more independent with technology and now she more easily incorporates technology into her life. To date, Brieta continues to independently participate in tech coaching with the bi-monthly Check-in with Friends. She is also now better prepared to participate in our other upcoming virtual events, including our much-anticipated annual meeting in December.