

Many years ago, when Anna became a young adult, she moved from her loving parents' home to her current residence with her host home provider. When Anna came to live with her provider, she brought with her an older laptop for which she self-entertained. During Anna's last years living with her family and while in school, she learned technology skills that aided her with the independent use of the device. After her living transition, she continued to use it. In fact, Anna was so independent she did not always appreciate the support of her provider to troubleshoot issues with the aging equipment. Eventually the software updates became too cumbersome, and the device's timely responsiveness slowed significantly. Anna became frustrated and decided to dispose of the laptop. Since that time, likely upwards of a decade, Anna has not used another device. In fact, her host home provider and peer housemates have chosen to live without access to most technology, including no internet access or cable television for the last several years. Technology simply hasn't been a high priority for this familial unit and until the pandemic, there hadn't been much reason to change that. As the world around them began to transition into more technological engagement, the possibility of a transition for their household seemed inevitable.

Prior to the pandemic, Anna didn't seem very interested in obtaining another device per her provider, until she had the opportunity to participate in the 4-week music coding tech coaching sessions with Code Ninjas. You see, Anna has a beautiful singing voice and is a natural musical performer. At times, she partners with her longtime friend from Friendship Club to perform Christmas carols; while Anna sings, her friend accompanies her with the piano. Thus, the chance to explore music in a more technological way was an intriguing new opportunity for Anna to further pursue her passion.

During the coding classes, Anna demonstrated very rudimentary level skills, an anticipated atrophy of skill since the independent use of her previous device so many years ago. Initially she required hand over hand assistance with short verbal prompts. After the completion of the first class, she began physically using the device independently with continued verbal prompting. As the classes progressed, Anna's confidence reemerged and her ability to focus and remain focused improved. Those who have met Anna, recognize she has a very distinct verbal and physical communication style. As a very social person, Anna enjoys engaging with anyone she meets and is always the first to provide a compliment to make someone more comfortable. When Anna personally interacts with people, she makes direct eye contact, often accompanied with a handshake, and quickly makes conversation. After she commences her statements within only a few seconds, she looks downward and does so until she has more verbal conversation to contribute.

When participating in tech coaching, Anna demonstrated an increased interest and ability to remain visually focused on the device while still engaging in the verbal instruction. By the end of the 4-week sessions, Anna was estimated to maintain her focus and looking forward, for upwards of 5 minutes. The opportunity to focus her attention on the device, rather than someone else, allowed her to engage more fully with those around her and her environment. The fact that the tech coaching was music based certainly supported Anna's interest. The opportunity for her use of multiple modalities to participate in her surroundings seemed to really suit Anna's social engagement preferences.

Since the tech coaching sessions, Anna has applied and been approved for a device through our agency's Inclusive Technology Access Fund and her provider is committed to ensuring internet access for the household. Upon receipt, we are hopeful that Anna will continue to grow her skills and participate more in the virtual opportunities. Right around the corner is our agency's virtual Annual Meeting, a favorite event of Anna's prior to the pandemic. Anna will now have the opportunity, means and skills to attend. She is also looking forward to future virtual participation with Check-in with Friends, a local self-advocacy group that meets bi-monthly in which some of Anna's longtime friends already regularly attend.