



After High School

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Two years ago (at age 24), I took a class about blogging from the University of Texas at Austin (UT) Informal Classes, but not without frustration (because of my disability). So now I'm a blogger, but it didn't hold a candle to a more recent experience!!!

Now there are *UT Informal Classes with supports for IDD*. Six subjects are offered each semester, including summers, on academics, personal development, culture, and science. I chose art (my hands can't write but a paintbrush is more forgiving because it uses my whole arm instead of my pincer grip).

Each week, we met at an outdoor café to socialize for a half hour. We had almost as many UT student volunteers as we numbered. They walked us to class, kept track of our supplies, and for me they washed my brushes because I don't roll under a sink. We all had lots of fun and learned from each other. Some volunteers learned art for the first time and tried painting with us; they also learned about our varied disabilities, and how busy we are in our lives.

We talked a lot about Justin Bieber and Frozen and military aircraft, and food of course. We sang the Frozen songs. Quiet people opened up. The volunteers became as silly as we are. We worked at our own paces, sometimes it was outdoors.

Dustin Meyers, our instructor, was awesome!!! Together as a class we painted Monet's *Impression, Sunset*, and also we painted some sunflowers. Then we each chose a final project and I, of course, painted my service dog Karma. At the end, we had an exhibit and our parents attended.

Here's why I liked it and have signed up for Jazz Appreciation next. We talked the whole time! Everyone chose to be there. We helped each other. We made daily goals, like to use more water or more paint, to not paint so slowly, to not expect perfection. And, it turns out, that I like using acrylics as much as I have always enjoyed watercolors. Who knew?

Thank you to Gerard Jimenez and Jonathan Pierce-Shimomura for designing these courses, so that everyone can enjoy Informal Classes. If you want to learn more, write to jonps@austin.utexas.edu or call him at 512-232-4137.

Texas Parent to Parent

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