THE CUEST-FOR INDEPENDENCE

MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND PRE-ETS BEST PRACTICES GUIDE



Massachusetts Commission for the Blind Pre-Ets Best Practices Guide

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600 Washington Street Boston, MA 02111 United States of America

THE QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

Your journey from high school to college and beyond starts today. Discover new skills, tools and superpowers that allow you to bravely face new challenges and overcome obstacles.

Dear Pre-ETS Community:

Thank you for your interest in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) provided by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB).

An essential part of our mission at MCB is to promote independence and self-determination for the people we serve. We have developed this graphic novel featuring characters inspired by blind and visually impaired individuals with the hope of improving employment outcomes for our community.

Our goal is to increase our engagement with young adults between 14-22 years of age, along with their families and friends. Massachusetts is one of the oldest agencies dedicated to servicing the blind community, with Helen Keller as one of the original commissioners. We hope this graphic novel will serve as a guide for Pre-ETS Best Practices, as you take the important steps in your journey towards a fulfilling career and independent life. Just like our characters Alex and Sophia, we want your story to grow and evolve with you.

We have an agency full of colleagues who are dedicated to serving you and our mission. Collectively, they represent our story's hero, MC-B. While we don't pretend that MCB or MC-B have all the answers, many of us, including myself, have learned from experience that having support and access to services during your formative years can be life-changing.

MCB is here to serve you, your families and our Commonwealth. We work with children, youth, adults, and seniors who are all at different stages in their career journeys.

We celebrate your quest for independence and hope to support you in any way possible.

Thank you for joining us on this adventure.

Sincerely,

David D'Arcangelo

Commissioner

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN!











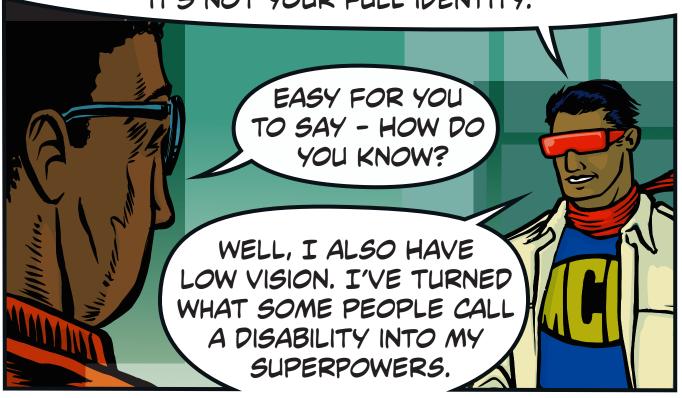


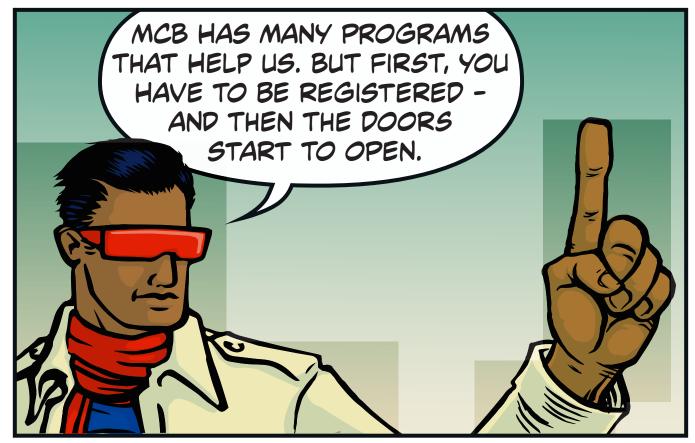


JUST GIVE ME A
MINUTE - I'LL BE RIGHT
WITH YOU. I NEED TO
GRAB SOMETHING.



LOOK, I GET IT. YOU'RE UPSET ABOUT BEING DECLARED LEGALLY BLIND. IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD. IT DOESN'T CHANGE WHO YOU ARE, IT'S NOT YOUR FULL IDENTITY.

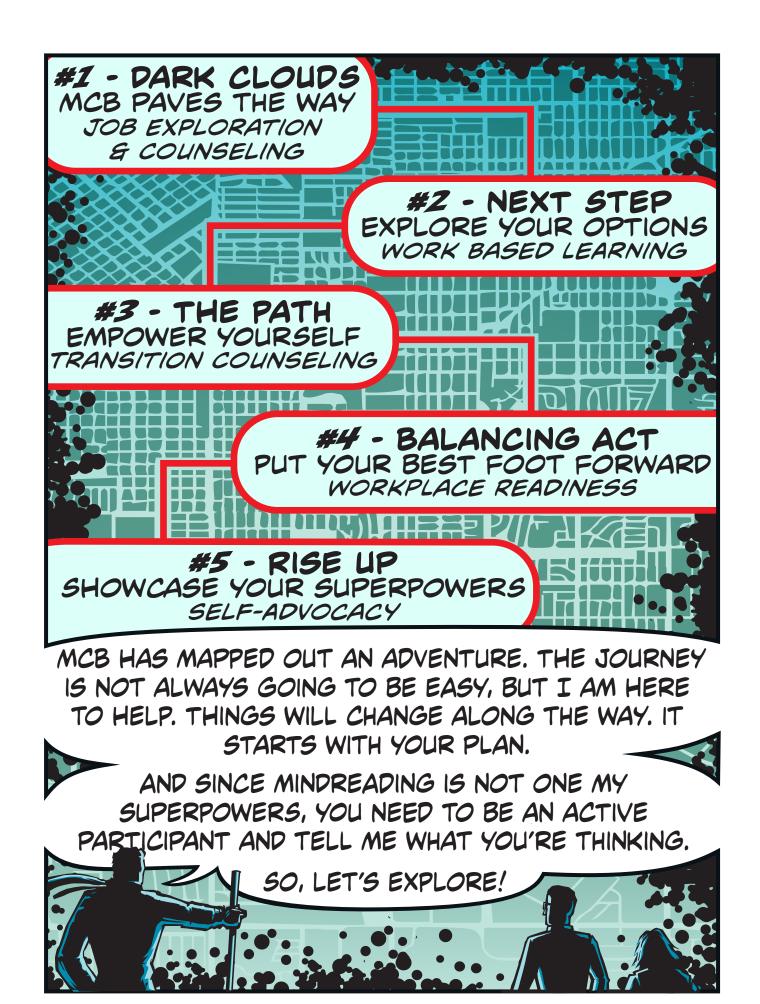








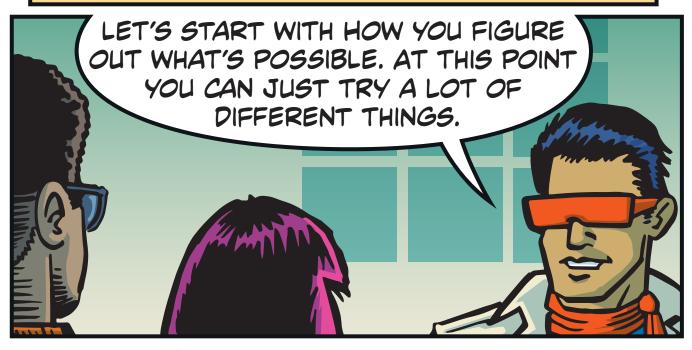


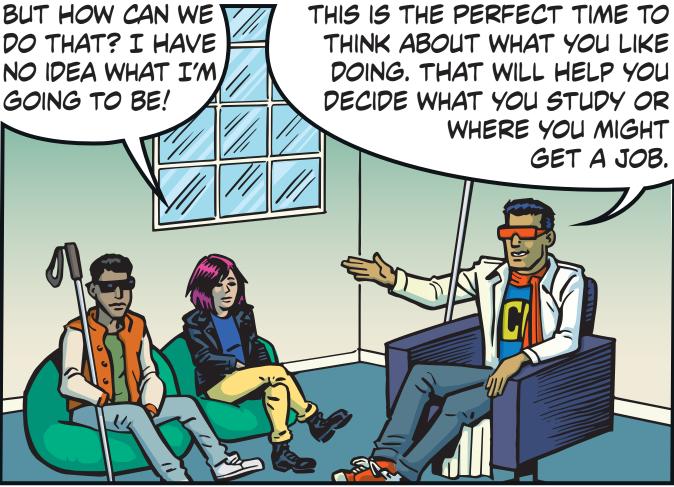




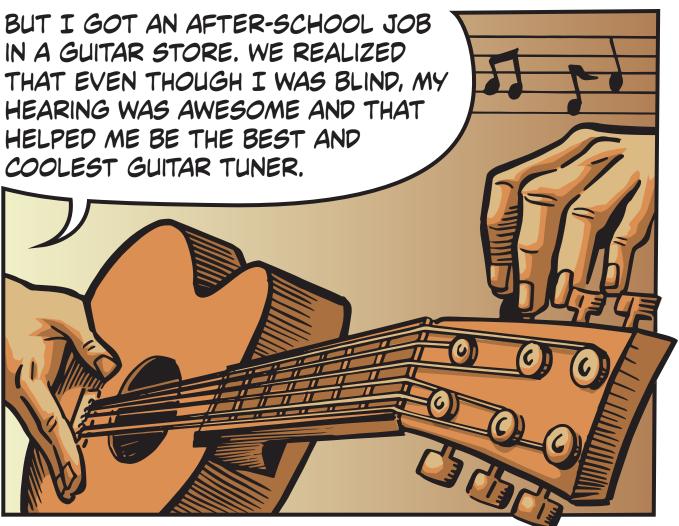
CHAPTER 1

DARK CLOUDS - MCB PAVES THE WAY JOB EXPLORATION & COUNSELING









IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO IT'S THE COMBO OF WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO AND WHAT
YOU ARE GOOD AT THAT WILL LEAD TO YOUR SUCCESS.

SO, LET'S EXPLORE USING ONE OF OUR ONLINE TOOLS.

BY THE WAY, LEARNING ABOUT ASSISTIVE
TECHNOLOGY WILL BE A HUGE ASSET FOR YOU - ONE
OF YOUR SUPERPOWERS. LIKE IN THIS CASE, YOU
CAN USE A SCREEN READER TO HELP YOU.





IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S ALL KINDS OF THINGS YOU COULD DO - FROM CARING FOR ANIMALS

TO ANIMAL TRAINING.

ANIMALS

- · ANIMAL TRAINER
- · ANIMAL CARE WORKER
- · YETERINARY ASSISTANT



HEY VIRTUAL ASSISTANT! WHAT ANIMAL SHELTERS



YES, I FOUND TWO SHELTERS NEAR HERE. DO YOU WANT THEIR NAMES OR ADDRESSES?



LET'S WRITE THIS DOWN IN YOUR PLAN AND THEN LATER ON YOU CAN TALK TO YOUR MOM. THEN YOU CALL THEM AND SEE WHAT THEY HAVE FOR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES - AFTER SCHOOL OR WEEKENDS. THAT WOULD GIVE YOU SOME WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE.



YOU'LL RUN INTO A LOT OF PEOPLE ALONG THE WAY WHO WILL BE ABLE TO HELP YOU MAKE CONNECTIONS. DON'T BE SHY ABOUT BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS EVERY CHANCE YOU GET.

I AM ON A FIRST ROBOTICS TEAM AT SCHOOL AND AM ONE OF THE OUTREACH LEADS. I ENJOY HELPING THE NEW STUDENTS COMING IN. I THINK THEY LOOK UP TO ME BECAUSE OF WHAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DO AS A BLIND GUY.



HOW ABOUT IF I INTRODUCE YOU TO A FRIEND OF MINE WHO JUST BECAME A SCIENCE TEACHER?

SHE'S SOMEONE YOU COULD TALK TO ABOUT WHAT COURSES YOU NEED OR EVEN WHAT COLLEGE YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT.



CHAPTER 2

NEW THINGS - EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS WORK BASED LEARNING

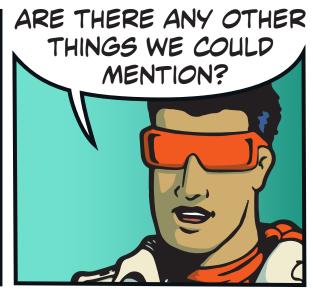
IT'S ONE WEEK LATER: SOPHIA'S MOM COMES TO THE FIRST PART OF THE MEETING, SOPHIA HAS DECIDED TO TRY TO VOLUNTEER AT THE ANIMAL SHELTER.

GREAT NEWS SOPHIA! THE ANIMAL SHELTER JOB COULD BE REALLY FUN! IT'S WONDERFUL YOUR



FOR EXPERIENCE? SOPHIA HASN'T HAD A JOB YET.







YES! THAT'S PERFECT TO SHOW THAT YOU HAVE RELATED EXPERIENCE.



LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE GOING WELL! I'LL BE BACK LATER TO PICK YOU UP.





LET'S GET THIS WRAPPED UP. LATER WE CAN CONDUCT A MOCK INTERVIEW.



I'LL PRETEND TO BE THE MANAGER AT THE SHELTER AND I'LL ASK SOME INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.
YOU CAN PRACTICE WHAT YOU WOULD SAY AT THE INTERVIEW TO HELP YOU PREPARE.

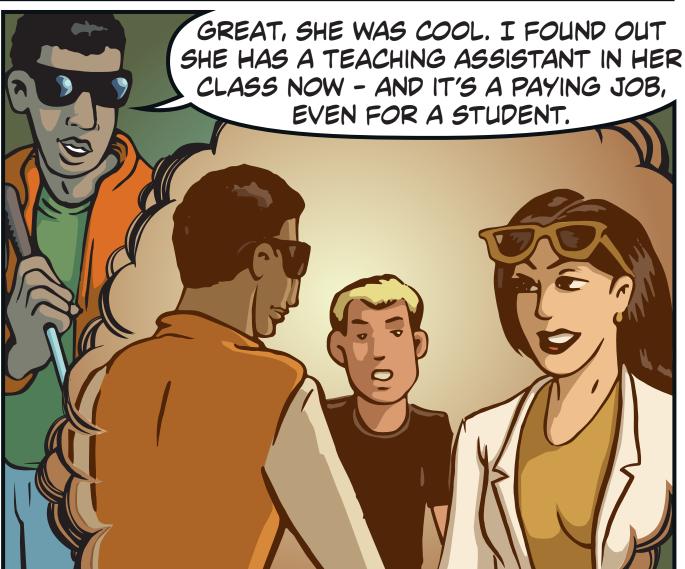


I'M SURE YOU WILL BE GOOD AT IT, BUT IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, THAT'S OKAY. YOUR FIRST JOB IS NOT GOING TO BE YOUR LAST JOB - IT'S THE EXPERIENCE



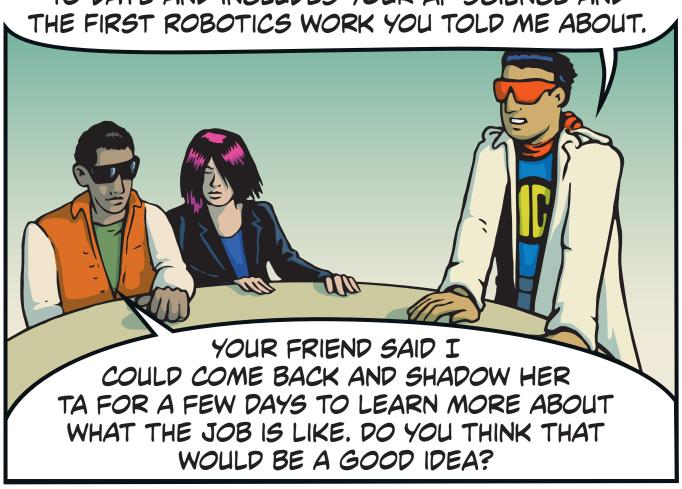
HEY ALEX! HOW'D
THE MEETING GO
WITH MY FRIEND THE
SCIENCE TEACHER?







OF COURSE! LET'S MAKE SURE YOUR RESUME IS UP TO DATE AND INCLUDES YOUR AP SCIENCE AND THE FIRST POROTICS WORK YOU TOLD ME ABOUT



YES, THAT'S A GREAT IDEA ALEX.

BOTH YOU AND SOPHIA HAVE A
CHANCE TO EXPLORE THINGS
YOU LIKE AND BUILD YOUR
EXPERIENCE WITHOUT
MAKING ANY BIG
COMMITMENTS.

IT'S ABOUT TRYING
THINGS OUT TO HELP YOU
LEARN ABOUT DIFFERENT
JOBS. REMEMBER, IT'S ALL
PART OF THE JOURNEY.

CHAPTER 3

THE PATH - EMPOWER YOURSELF
TRANSITION COUNSELING

IT'S ONE MONTH LATER - ALEX AND SOPHIA ARE BACK IN A MEETING WITH MCB IN THE SAME ROOM.



DIDN'T GET CHOSEN FOR THE FIRST ONE,

BUT THE SECOND ONE WORKED OUT.

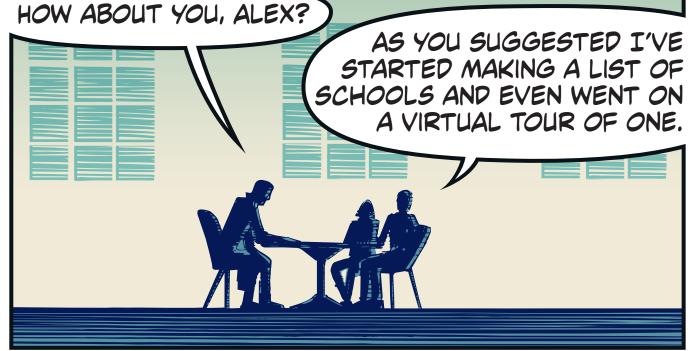
I VOLUNTEER ON SATURDAYS.

HOW'S THAT GOING?

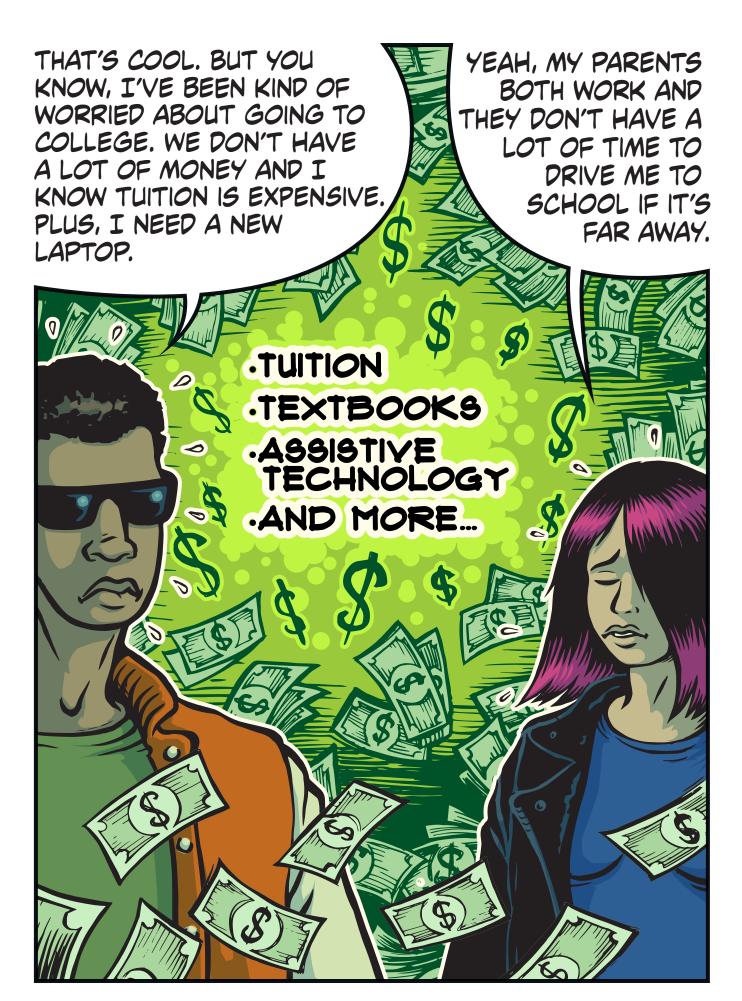
I DO A LOT OF
DIFFERENT THINGS
WITH THE ANIMALS AND I
GET TO HELP PEOPLE ADOPT
THEIR PETS AND I EVEN GOT
TO HOLD A HEDGEHOG! THE
PEOPLE ARE GREAT AND I'M
LEARNING A LOT. I LOVE IT!











WELL, THERE'S GREAT NEWS ON ALL THAT. THE MCB PROGRAM CAN HELP WITH TUITION, TEXTBOOKS, ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND MORE. ·TUITION .TEXTBOOKS **ASSISTIVE** TECHNOLOGY AND MORE... WE'RE EVEN HERE TO HELP YOU GET READY TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES. #1 - DARK CLOUDS #2 - NEXT STEP #3 - THE PATH #4 - BALANCING ACT #5 - RISE UP REALLY?! MCB DOES ALL OF THAT FOR US?



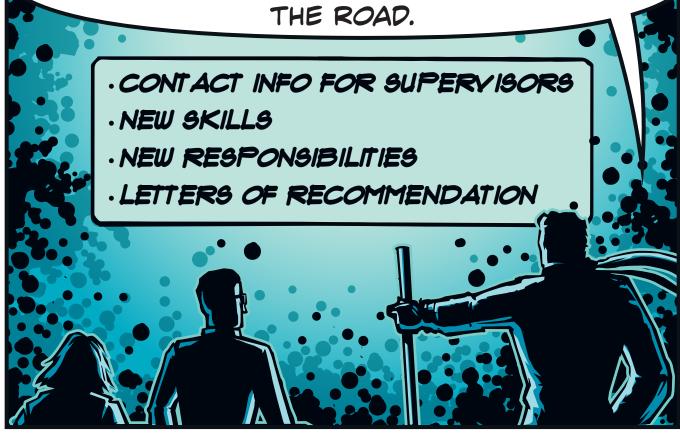
CHAPTER 4

BALANCING ACT - PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD WORKPLACE READINESS

THE DISCUSSION HAS PROGRESSED TO THINKING BEYOND COLLEGE: HOW TO PREPARE FOR WORKING AND LIVING INDEPENDENTLY.

IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE BUILDING YOUR CAREER IS A LONG WAY OFF AND WE KNOW THINGS ARE GOING TO CHANGE ALONG THE WAY, BUT THE MORE YOU DO NOW TO GET READY - THE BETTER.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SOME OF THE THINGS TO KEEP TRACK OF IN YOUR PLAN. IF YOU DON'T WRITE THEM DOWN YOU WILL FORGET. TRUST ME, YOU'RE GOING TO NEED IT DOWN



SOPHIA, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU DID WHILE, VOLUNTEERING THAT WOULD BE GOOD

TO PUT IN YOUR PLAN?

IT WAS REALLY BUSY. THE PROBLEM IS, LOTS OF TIMES I HAD TO STOP WHAT I WAS DOING TO HELP WITH SOMETHING ELSE. IT WAS A BIT STRESSFUL, BUT I FIGURED OUT HOW TO GO BACK AND FORTH AND NOT LET IT BOTHER ME.



WHAT ABOUT YOU ALEX?

THINGS ARE GOING REALLY GREAT; THE TEACHER SAYS I REALLY HELP THE STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPTS -THAT I HAVE 'PATIENCE, UNDERSTANDING AND INTELLECT'.





WELL,
IT'S EVERYTHING FROM
HOW YOU PRESENT YOURSELF,
YOUR BODY LANGUAGE, YOUR
TONE OF VOICE AND HOW YOU
INTERACT WITH PEOPLE.
SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO
PRACTICE TO GET
IT RIGHT.



HERE'S SOME EXAMPLES OF SOFT SKILLS THAT RELATE TO JOB INTERVIEWS...

BY THE WAY, I LEARNED ABOUT DRESSING APPROPRIATELY THE HARD WAY!

I WENT TO AN INTERVIEW THINKING I WAS LOOKING REALLY GOOD, BUT WHEN I GOT HOME, MY MOM POINTED OUT A HUGE STAIN ON MY VEST. I WAS SO EMBARRASSED. I LEARNED THAT I NEED TO HAVE SOMEONE LOOK ME



THE POINT IS, WE'VE GOT YOUR BACKS!

AND PREPARE.

THE ANSWER IS NOT ALWAYS GOING TO BE YES. YOU WILL FACE ADVERSITY; YOU WILLSCRAPE YOUR KNEES ALONG THE WAY. BE PATIENT AND PERSISTENT. DEVELOP RESILIENCE. EVERY INTERACTION IS A CHANCE TO BUILD YOUR NETWORK AND YOUR SKILLS.



RISE UP - SHOWCASE YOUR SUPERPOWERS







SORRY I'M LATE -I HAD TO GO TO THE EYE DOCTOR.

OH, NO PROBLEM. NICE NEW GLASSES!



YEAH, MY VISION IS GETTING WORSE TO THE POINT WHERE I CAN'T WEAR MY CONTACTS ANYMORE. I'VE HAD TO SWITCH TO THESE, BUT AT LEAST THEY ARE KIND OF COOL.



I LIKE HOW YOU PUT A POSITIVE SPIN ON IT.
THAT'S A NICE LEAD INTO OUR NEXT TOPIC HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR ABILITIES BUT NOT
DENY YOUR DISABILITIES. HOW TO SHOWCASE
YOUR SUPERPOWERS.



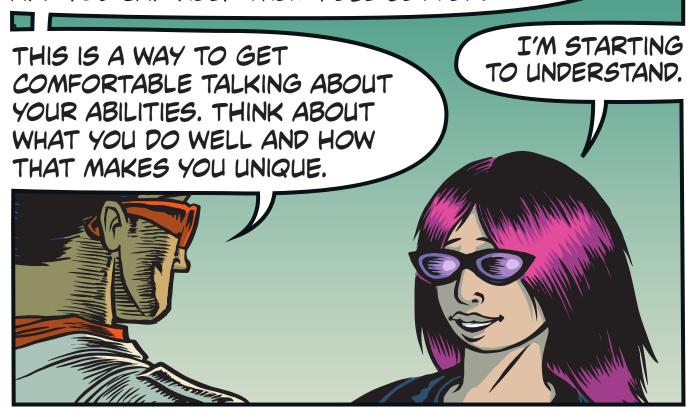
SOPHIA - WHAT'S ONE OF YOUR SUPERPOWERS?

WELL, I DON'T THINK I HAVE A SUPERPOWER ...

I THINK YOU DO. I REMEMBER YOU'RE REALLY GOOD AT CALMING PETS AND THEIR OWNERS. I BET THAT WORKS ATHOME WHEN YOUR LITTLE BROTHER IS UPSET TOO.



SO, THAT MEANS ONE OF YOUR SUPERPOWERS IS EMPATHY. YOU ARE SENSITIVE TO OTHER PEOPLE AND YOU CAN HELP THEM FEEL BETTER.



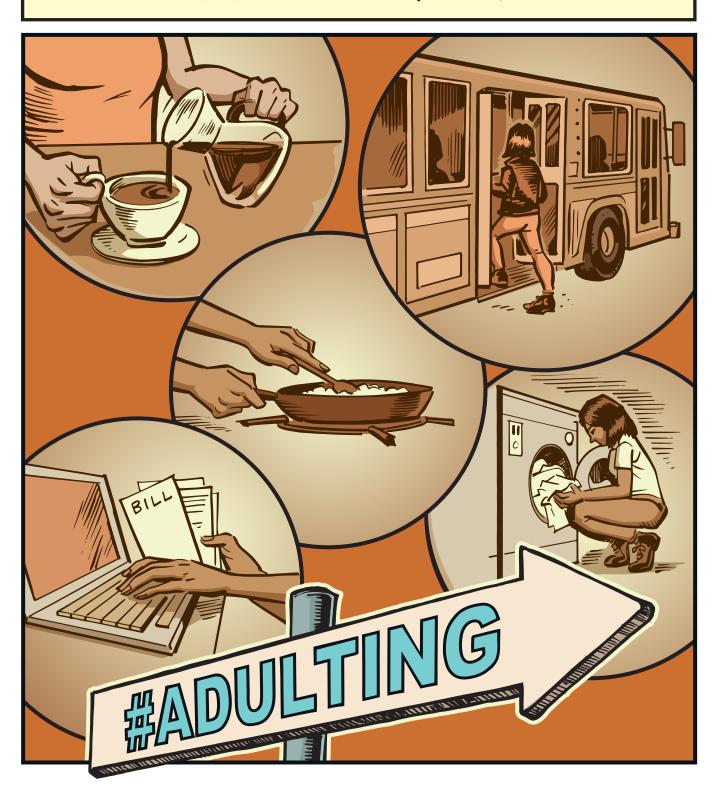
I'VE ALREADY BEEN WORKING ON THIS A BIT IN MY COLLEGE APPLICATIONS. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT HAS HELPED ME IS TO LOOK BACK IN MY JOURNAL FOR THINGS I WAS GOOD AT AND STUFF I LIKED.



WONDERFUL. ALL THOSE NOTES YOU TOOK WILL COME IN HANDY AS YOU WRITE YOUR OWN STORY. DON'T BE SHY TO TALK ABOUT YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. LET ME SHARE ANOTHER STORY FROM MY PAST. I
WAS INTERVIEWING FOR A JOB AND WHEN THEY
FOUND OUT I WAS BLIND THEY THOUGHT I
WOULDN'T BE A FIT. THEY SAID I WOULD HAVE
TROUBLE GETTING TO MEETINGS. WELL, I HAD TO
TELL THEM, I'VE BEEN LEARNING HOW TO TRAVEL
INDEPENDENTLY AND GET AROUND WITH MY CANE
SINCE I WAS A LITTLE KID. I GOT THAT JOB. AND



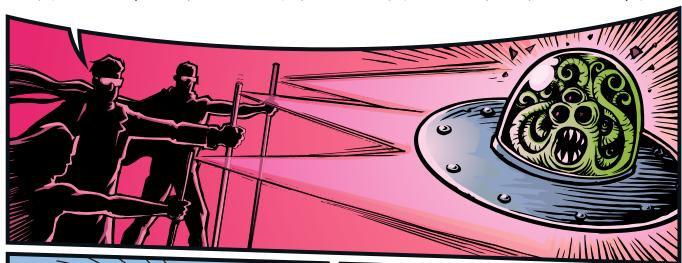
MCB OFFERS MOBILITY TRAINING THAT GETS YOU NAVIGATING AND TRAVELING ON YOUR OWN. MCB ALSO ASSISTS IN TEACHING YOU TO USE NONVISUAL TECHNIQUES OR YOUR REMAINING VISION IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE.



THE POINT IS, SOMETIMES EMPLOYERS ONLY SEE OUR DISABILITIES, THEY DON'T SEE OUR SUPER-POWERS. OUR JOB IS TO SHOW THEM WHY HIRING



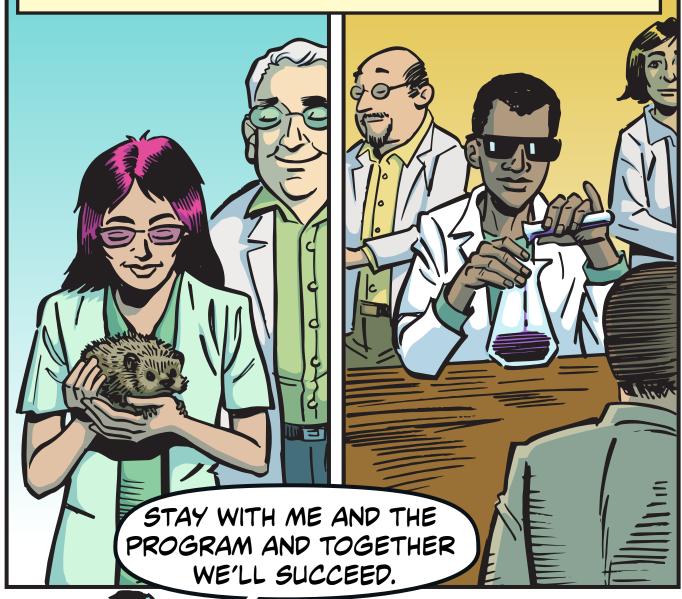
OUR EXPERIENCE PROVES THAT WE HAVE GUTS, WE ADAPT, WE HAVE OVERCOME OBSTACLES, WE HAVE PERSEVERED, WE HAVE PROVEN THAT WE ARE MORE THAN CAPABLE. WE'RE THE KIND OF PEOPLE THAT EMPLOYERS WANT TO HAVE ON THEIR TEAM.



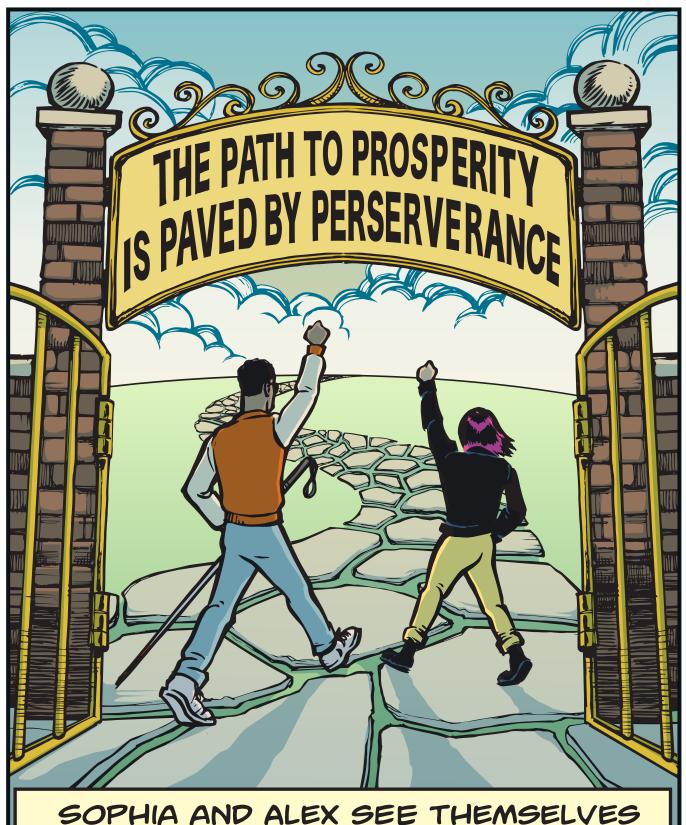


OUR JOB IS TO STAND UP FOR OURSELVES AND BE STRONG. WE CAN TELL THOSE PEOPLE WHO THINK WE'RE LESS CAPABLE BECAUSE WE'RE BLIND, THAT OUR BLINDNESS IS NOT A WEAKNESS, IT'S A STRENGTH.

AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY, OUR TEENS DECIDE THAT GETTING SUPPORT FROM MCB AND LEVERAGING PRE-ETS SERVICES IS THE TICKET TO THEIR FUTURE.







SOPHIA AND ALEX SEE THEMSELVES TRANSITION FROM TEENS TO ACCOMPLISHED, INDEPENDENT, YOUNG ADULTS WORKING IN JOBS THEY LOVE.

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THE QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

ALEX AND SOPHIA ARE TWO VISUALLY IMPAIRED TEENS ON A QUEST TRYING TO FIT IN AND MANEUVER THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL. LIKE OTHER TEENS WHO HAVE LIMITED VISION OR ARE BLIND, THEY STRIVE TO BE INDEPENDENT BUT ARE UNAWARE OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THEM. AS IN ANY GOOD ADVENTURE, THEY BRAVELY FACE ADVERSITY AND OVERCOME OBSTACLES.

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN!



For more information go to

www.mcb-thequestforindependence.com

There you can download
the book, soundtrack, map
resources & more.

