

Blake speaking

“Hey everyone, this is Blake the uh Social Media Assistant with the New Hampshire Council on Developmental Disabilities hanging with my buddy Tim Houle uh of the Council. “Tim, you wanna introduce yourself?”

Tim speaking

“Yeah, hey everybody I’m Tim Houle, I’m Vice Chair on the New Hampshire DD Council. And I’m, I’m hanging with Blake!”

Blake speaking

“Awesome awesome thanks Tim. And so we are just kinda taking a walk because it’s such a nice day out today folks by the way if you’re not outside today on Friday March 31st 2023 the year of our Lord get outside because it is really nice out, which is what we are doing. And Tim I’m just going to start off by asking you really a basic uh sort of question uhm what does March being National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, what does that Month mean to you? When you hear those words?”

Tim speaking

“It means alot to me Blake. I live with cerebral palsy. I’m 34, I have a disability. I don’t like it but, it is what it is I guess, you know I hate that saying. I had surgery when I was 3 years old on my legs to keep my legs straight, and it didn’t work. I got bullied a lot in school because of my disability. Had a hard time making friends. But, I was able to graduate in 2007 in high school, from Raymond New Hampshire, its where I grew up. And then after graduating high school I got into a program called Life Share for people with disabilities. I go, I am currently in a, a program for people with disabilities called Work Opportunities, I work at TJ MAXX in Portsmouth. I like it. I uhh, stock shelves. I have a lot of friends now. I go to Camp Allen in Bedford, New Hampshire every summer. I’m going this year for 2 weeks in August, the last 2 weeks of August.”

Blake speaking

“Oh nice, yeah I uh, I’ve volunteered there in the past and uh I think that’s where we had the Blues BBQ? Uh”

Tim speaking

“I haven’t been to that yet”

Blake speaking

“It’s fun man, you gotta go, good barbecue, dancing and great music. Uh, so Tim first of all thank you for sharing some of that story you know and uh uh, and opening up and I think that leads really perfectly into my next question which was going to be you know

what is one thing, if you can boil it down to one thing there's probably many things you wanna see changed, but what is one real tangible thing you'd like to see changed to benefit the disabled community whether it sounds like you know more social and societal awareness for folks to stop bullying and you know uh, expanding ableism which we see all the time unfortunately. Uh, but what for you is something that comes to mind that you wanna see changed when it comes to benefitting the disability community?"

Tim speaking

"Something I wanna see changed to benefit the disability community is more for people with disabilities at work. More accessible parking. More accessibility in the community and at, at home for people with disabilities"

Blake speaking

"Yeah, and I think a lot of that comes down to, uhm, the folks up in Concord who make a lot of the legislative decisions, uhm, getting folks in the disability community to get comfortable enough, like you are with me, going there sharing their stories on certain bills and topics and hopefully pushing the needle in the right direction on a conversation and getting good legislation passed to better benefit, uh, the community. Uhm, for me I feel like that's a, a really big part of it. Uhm and then you know Tim I'd love for you to share just a little bit about your interactions with folks at the Council as uhm you said it was Vice Chair?"

Tim speaking

"Yeah Vice Chair"

Blake speaking

"Yeah as Vice Chair, uhm so, yeah he outranks me I'm just the lowly social media guy. He's, he's really one of my bosses!"

\*Tim laughs at this\*

"And uhm, you know just share a little bit about uhm, your positive interactions with people at the Council and why you love being, being part of the Council."

Tim speaking

"I love meeting new people and learning new things. I've learned a bit about being Vice Chair and how, and how that works. And how to start the meetings and introduce everybody. And help everybody out. We got a really good group of people and I am proud to be on the Council advocating for myself and voicing my own opinions, telling my story, so I really enjoy it."

Blake speaking

“No, I uh, I love that, it was actually Vanessa that got me to interview for the position I’m in and I could not be more grateful to her for that. And Tim and I were just saying before we hit record here that uhm, you know we all have different reasons why we want to better uhm push the cause of disab-, disability rights forward and uh you know there's a lot of practical and really important reasons why but there also has to be some fun reasons like that make the work worth doing everyday and I was saying to Tim that in the Stepping Stones magazine he didn't realize that that uh, Marvel superhero centric article was written and uh pub-, published by me and I was like it's not uh everyday that you get to say like hey you know what I do for work? I got to write an article about the intersectionality of Marvel superheroes and disability rights and how those two things come together. And that's just a very fun thing for me! Uhm, and he didn't realize it, he was very surprised to hear that, that was me. Uhm but so Tim that leads us to my question here of what is, if you could say, one fun reason that would get somebody out of bed in the morning and want to you know, take, take up the cause of advancing disability rights?”

Tim speaking

“One reason why you should join, is, it's a lot of fun, we go on trips, we talk about all kinds of different topics. You meet a lot of new people, learn new things, and just basically be yourself and have fun.”

Blake speaking

“Yeah and like I said to Tim you know uhh the Blues BBQ, that is a perfect example of that which is put on by the Council and Able NH and lots of other great groups. I mean look, you get barbecue, you get dancing, you get friends, you get Blues music. I really fail to see how it can get better than that in my, in my humble opinion. And uhm Tim I think one last really important question I think or really, just a closing statement from you about uhm, what you're so grateful for everyday when you wake up? Uhm doesn't have to be disability rights related, just uhm one thing you're grateful for when you wake up in the morning everyday?”

Tim speaking

“I'm grateful for my friends and family. I'm grateful for my job. I'm grateful for, for everything.”

Blake speaking

“I love that. I go, I go to yoga and uhm one thing one of my regular teachers always says is, she always closes class by saying this sentence that really resonates with me which is “everyday we wake up and are able to put our two feet on the earth or really just breathe the air is a gift. Uhm, and we gotta make the most of that gift every single

day. Uhm, being kind to people and doing the, the work that you, I and so many others we know are doing. Uhm, and I just want to say thank you to Tim for letting me drive out to Newmarket because he's only ever met me on Zoom very very briefly in passing or seen my name in emails maybe or in Marvel superhero articles apparently and so it's great to actually be able to spend some time on a gorgeous day meeting uh, meeting you in person. So I appreciate you."

Tim speaking

"Yeah, well thank you for coming out Blake!"

Blake speaking

"Awesome, well we're gunna hit record and uh, and end it there guys and uh we're gunna keep walking because it's nice out but uh we will be posting this on the social media soon. You'll see a fun picture of the two of us and uh yeah follow the Council for all the amazing work we're doing and fun events to come up this spring and summer. Cheers ya'll"