

# A STRONG SELF ADVOCATE AFFIRMS HER INDEPENDENCE

We first met Raven at a Self-Advocacy group, and had no doubt that she was both able and determined to make her own decisions, but also that she would use that power to advocate for positive change. This past Monday she (and we) celebrated her SDMA signing.



Raven is 39, lives in the Bronx and has recently used her supporters to make a big decision— a 3-week trip to Las Vegas with a friend, for which she did all the planning. She enjoyed “eating a lot and gambling”, but also notes that it was “very hot!” (not so bad on what looks like a cold and snowy weekend coming up!) That was a decision about fun, but she’s also serious about getting the tools she needs to have her best life: she has just been accepted into the HSE (what we used to call GED) program at Brooklyn College, which she started on January 10.

Raven describes the SDM facilitation process as “well worth it.” She says SDM is important because “It is helping me to be more independent because I can do more for myself.” But, excellent advocate that she is, it’s not just about herself. When the program she attends suffered deep staff cuts recently, she met with the program director and advocated for more staff. She is now preparing to write to her elected officials about the issue.

Raven’s facilitator, Tanisha, was a student at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College who has since graduated; her mentor, Prof. Patricia Gray noted how Tanisha balanced her student needs and work life at S:US to help Raven and her team develop an excellent SDMA. One of Raven’s supporters, her dad, joined the signing, by Zoom, from South Carolina, and noted the value of SDM because “It gives [Raven] independence and the ability to make decisions on her own with support and with information.”

**CONGRATULATIONS RAVEN AND KEEP ON ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS!**