

AN SDMA SIGNING, BUILDING ON THE DECISION-MAKER'S STRENGTHS

We all have strengths and weaknesses; people with I/DD are no different from anyone else. Our now well developed and tested facilitation process is individualized to draw on the Decision-Maker's strengths and existing interests in guiding them to understand how decisions are made, the steps that go into every decision, and, in each area where the Decision-Maker seeks support, which of those steps they can do on their own, and which may require assistance from supporters they choose. Foregrounding the strengths they bring to the process is also important in building intrinsic motivation, that is, ensuring that a Decision-Maker genuinely wants to be engaged in the facilitation process. A recent SDMA signing reminded us of this aspect of our work in a joyful, celebratory fashion.



Mentor Susan, Facilitator Craig, DM Anthony with his supporter and mom Sara, Supporter and sister Sophia

Anthony is 18, with one more year of school to go before he applies to college. He lives in Westchester County with his parents and sister, all of whom he chose as supporters. The family is close and supportive; they take an annual vacation to Stone Harbor, New Jersey every summer, that Anthony describes as "very important to them as a family," and "a big part of [his] childhood."

In the course of getting to know Anthony, Facilitator Craig (who describes Anthony as "very talented and creative") learned of Anthony's hobby as a model builder. Anthony became interested in tanks as a result of the Ukraine war, and encouraged by his dad, now has 11 completed models. The work of constructing them is complex and requires accuracy and a fine attention to detail. In utilizing the instructions that come with various kits, Anthony has been able to analyze the prescribed steps, and to evaluate the ways in which the models are molded to find ways that might have been done differently.

Among the steps involved in making decisions are gathering and understanding information, exploring options and alternatives, considering the consequences of a particular decision, and weighing alternatives. In his model-making, Anthony has already been skillfully employing his existing strengths and skills in each of these activities and was able to successfully translate them to making his SDMA.

SDMA Mentor Susan characterized the importance of understanding and building on Anthony's hobby this way: "I think the way Anthony got into tank model-building is consistent in the way that he wants support from his family in different areas. His father introduced him to model-building and other related topics, then offered him a chance to try it... I think this is an example of how Anthony appreciates being introduced to new things, as well as being offered options and making his own decision." Anthony agrees, saying that "My family has been providing support to me for my whole life and I'd like for them to continue to do that. I feel like I can make good decisions with their help. The SDMA says that they will continue to do this even though I'm considered an adult."

Every one of our Decision-Makers is unique, and learning about, and drawing on their strengths is an important—and often exciting and informative—part of the facilitation process. We can't wait to see how Anthony uses his strengths and talents as he pursues his goal of working with trains at Metro North, and as he makes his own decisions, with the support of his loving family.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ANTHONY, HIS SUPPORTERS, AND THANKS TO FACILITATOR CRAIG!