

A JOYFUL, SOMEWHAT BELATED SDMA SIGNING WITH THE “THREE AMIGOS”

We don't know whether they would refer to themselves exactly this way, but last Wednesday's signing ceremony for Decision-Maker Ben spotlighted a long and rewarding friendship with two great friends, Lev and Gus, becoming Ben's official supporters—together with a loving cast of family members, with even a “supporter-in waiting.”



Decision-Maker Ben

Ben, now 23, began his SDMNY facilitation 3 years ago, when he was still a student at the Cooke School, a place where we have had many friends and happy stories. Some family and life issues intervened, and it seemed like the facilitation had ended, but facilitator Simge (yes, the Simge who sends you Good News every week!) was encouraged to reach out, and Ben enthusiastically resumed the process. Three years may not be a record for a facilitation, though it certainly comes close. But, as we always say, facilitations belong to the Decision-Makers, so every one of them is different in its own ways, including how long it takes, and why.

That's not the most noteworthy fact, however. Among his supporters, Ben chose Gus, who was in his 10th grade class at Cooke, and Lev, who was a year behind them, describing them as “the coolest guys in the class” who became his best friends. Over the years they have enjoyed doing many “fun things” together, like going to parks and restaurants. One of the things they bonded over was music; Ben loves going to concerts and is a talented pianist who continues his studies to this day; Lev is a violinist who plays in many genres, especially jazz; and Gus is also a star on the keyboard as well as guitar and drums. They remembered one of their first performances together at a talent show eight years ago in December 2016 (Ben and Lev have an amazing talent for remembering dates!) Fortunately, Ben's dad captured it on video, and you can view these wonderful young musicians by [clicking here](#).



Lev, Ben, and Gus; December 2016

Lev has always had intriguing ideas of things to do so, among other areas, Ben chose him as a supporter for decisions on leisure activities. We're sure he'll be great in gathering and understanding relevant information, offering options and alternatives, and helping Ben weigh alternatives. Gus is a whizz on transportation issues, so he'll be supporting Ben on decisions about how to get to all those great activities. Supporters bring different interests, expertise and capabilities, and this group of friends is a perfect example of how all of us can and do utilize support from each other.



Ben with his mom Andrea

Ben's family members, who include his wonderful mom Andrea, stepdad Mike and Uncles Jay and Evan are important supporters as well. There's one family member, however, who has been involved in and excited about the facilitation process, but who can't be an “official” supporter—or at least not yet! Ben's little brother Matthew is 14 and, to be on a legally recognized SDMA, supporters must be 18 or older. So it may be a while, but we're guessing that like Lev, Gus, Andrea and the rest of Ben's supporters, Matthew will also be able to share his special talents and abilities, and his commitment to Ben's autonomy and self determination to support Ben to make his own decisions about his own, unique life.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BEN, HIS FAMILY, FACILITATOR SIMGE, AND ESPECIALLY TO “FRIENDS SUPPORTING FRIENDS!”