

SELF ADVOCATES NEWSLETTER

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, BE ABOUT IT

DEDICATED TO ALLEN ROSEN

This issue of the Self Advocates Newsletter is dedicated to Allen Rosen, a longtime YAI staff member. He played a key role in encouraging Self Advocates to find their inner writer and share their stories through this newsletter. Allen was a lifelong advocate for people with disabilities and he will be missed by many.

REMEMBERING ALLEN

BY ROBERT CARDONA

This article is dedicated to one of the most beloved YAI staff the individuals in the newsletter group worked with when the group was founded 15 years ago- Allen Rosen. People at the newsletter group worked with Allen when the group was founded 15 years ago!

Allen had been veryyyyyyyyy adamant in getting the YAI newsletter group off the ground - he encouraged many of the group members to foresee whatever articles they wanted to write about what was affecting the disability community - as far as marriage penalty laws, supported employment programs for people with disabilities, independent living apartment and group home staff trainings, and self advocacy group conferences and meetings.

Above all Allen was not only staff, he was YAI family - a family to all who cared about his well being and interests. He will be missed terribly.



Allen Rosen

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**TOP 5 REASONS THE
CENTRAL PARK CHALLENGE
2023 SHINED!**

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

June 3rd 2023. The weather was mostly bright, a little cloudy, no rain. I was in the perfect place to take a walk -- Central Park! That day was also the day of YOUTH ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES, CPC CHALLENGE! The only Bad News for this reporter was getting up so early on a Saturday, then dealing with the MTA when it comes to weekend schedule changes. Yet I arrived safely and was ready to report, take pictures, and do anything else that was needed.



A large group of people hold banners at CPC

Great beginning. The minute anyone arrived, they saw the saying:

YAI, LIVING, LOVING, WORKING!

Here are the top 5 reasons why I think the CPC June 3, 2023 went so well.

5-The People-All cheers! Everyone was well-behaved. No fights, No garbage anywhere, everyone was happy. Representatives from other disabled organizations helping each other. The Children walking and running, good news no one got hurt.

4-The Staff-Standing ovation! Staff there was responsible, helpful, and enjoyed working proudly that day. Jessica Stinchcomb, the person in charge, job, well done! Sarah Schwed who volunteered at the information table along with her husband and children were so nice, and helpful, Katya at the last minute kept the Self Advocated informed of any last-minute things.

All responsible that day. To add several Self Advocates took photos of some staff workers that day.

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3-Self Advocates-That day the self advocates showed their consistency. 1-Allan who was DJ for the last 30 minutes of the CPC, Mike was at the table, Janice, this reporter, Carmelo, Kenneth walked. At the last minute this reporter(Ismael), Carmelo, Stephen, and Jennifer were approached to speak on stage about the importance of Self Advocacy. That day we also remembered the work/legacy of two well-known Advocates GOD BLESS THEM JUDY HEUMANN AND HARRY BELAFONTE! THEIR SPIRITS LIVE ON!

2-Entertainment-There was a band in the morning to wake everyone up. Then there was the BLUE MAN GROUP who performed magical tricks, stunts, shook hands with people, high fives to everyone. The children cheered and cheered. Then there was CHEER NY YAI'S FAVORITE RED, WHITE AND BLUE! FINE PERFORMANCES ALL THE TIME. They gave Hugs/Kisses to children/parents, took pictures with everyone, brought a smile to everyone! They encouraged people to participate, making even more fun. This reporter spoke to many people who stated "They're all great. I love them." Another person stated, "This is one of our favorite events to attend" I'm sure that they will be back next year!

1-Hankering For More-So great seeing several people from Hankering for more. Lauren who worked at Hankering for years came by to visit, stating "This is one event I do my best never to miss" A GROUP picture taken shows how happy everyone was. Afterwards we had lunch at Patsy's Pizzeria near the area of Central Park West.

All good, "LIVING, LOVING, WORKING, that's what you see!

As Self Advocates say "YOU DON'T TALK ABOUT IT BE ABOUT IT!"



YAI staff, Ken Reedy, at Central Park Challenge

CINCINNATI ZOO

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS

While visiting my brother in Cincinnati, Ohio, I got to go to the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens. When I was standing in line to get on the train I noticed a person in a wheelchair riding the train. This got me wondering what else the zoo might have for people with disabilities. After my visit, I looked at the Zoo's website and found they have a program called 'Zoo Access for All'. This program was created in 2019 in partnership with the Cincinnati Children's Medical Center to become the most welcoming and accessible Zoo for individuals with disabilities and their families. I also learned from the website that many zoo employees went to a training program to learn how to better interact with the disability community. In addition to this training, the Zoo offers a wide variety of supports for people with disabilities. Some supports are sensory maps, a skip-the-line access pass, 2 calming rooms, and a sensory friendly restroom. Other supports available can be seen on the Cincinnati Zoo website: cincinnati-zoo.org/plan-your-visit/zoo-access-for-all

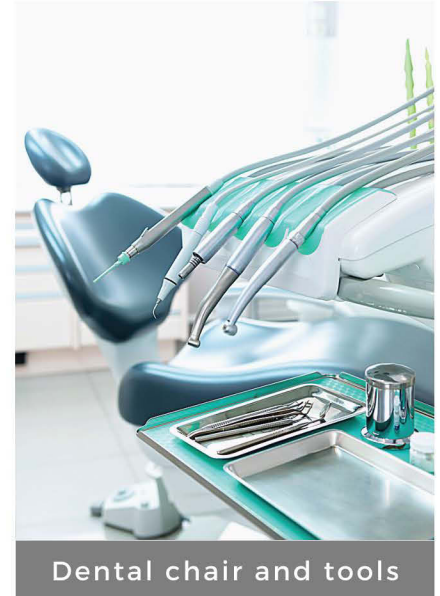
... the most welcoming and accessible Zoo for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Because the Cincinnati Zoo is so big and built on a hill, I benefited from the availability of wheelchairs to rent. Since I am able to walk short distances, I could get out of the wheelchair to see the animals and beautiful flowers better. Even though I rode in a wheelchair most of the time, my fitbit showed I had over 3000 steps!

WISDOM TEETH

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

I went to Woodhull Dentist in Oral Therapy from NYC Health Hospital on Flushing Avenue and Broadway in Brooklyn, NY to get my wisdom teeth out on Thursday July 13th. My doctor's name is Dr. Lin. I ate soft food and warm drink for 7 days. There was no exercise, working, cooking, or going out until my mouth felt better. I have a disability, but I rinsed my mouth with salt and warm water twice a day when I finished eating. I told my mother when my wisdom teeth were starting hurt and I took Ibuprofen and Tylenol for my wisdom teeth pain. I learned about wisdom teeth from "YouTube". I put the white bandage pad in my mouth to stop bleeding. When I eat hard food, I cannot chew, bite or crunch. I read my directions about the wisdom teeth. I was interested to learn about wisdom teeth.



Dental chair and tools

MIDDLE SCHOOL 88

BY ORLANDO JUAREZ



Orlando visiting MS88 in Brooklyn

Peter Rouger Middle School 88, or the Park Slope Educational Complex at Middle School 88, was the nearest middle school that I attended for 3 years in Park Slope. There were a lot of students who came from Sunset Park and ones that live around Park Slope. The halls have some good art works, it also had a lot of programs including dual-language Spanish instruction, accelerated courses, and extra supports for English language learners and children with disabilities. I've seen children in wheelchairs and using canes, also this also one of a p753k school.

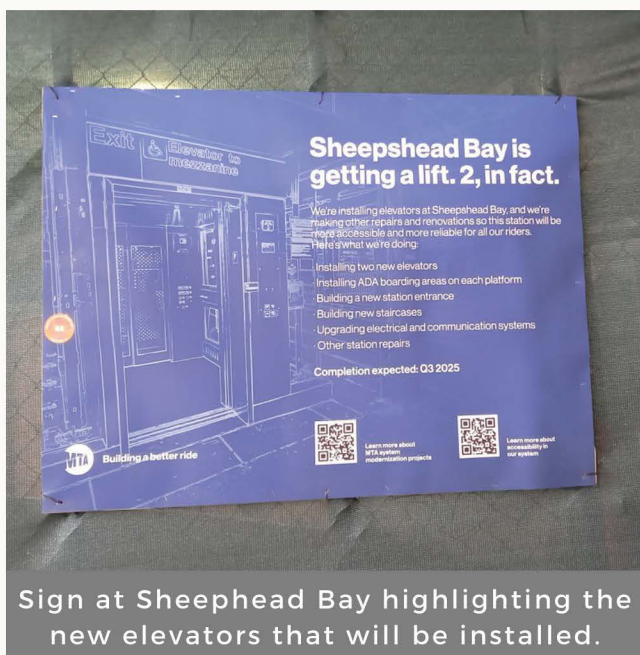
Back in the year 2000 when I started at 6th grade, I was full of energy, I sometimes got in trouble, and sometimes I got nervous and felt like I was weak, until 7th grade when I begin to get better and respected by teachers, the same at 8th grade. During my time at we went on good field trips including the museum of natural history at Manhattan, and the Brooklyn Zoo the bowling alley at 37th street called Melody Lanes. Although I had challenging times in middle school such as bullying and distractions, I always enjoyed those good moments, and I was able to move forward and to succeed on my grades until graduation. However, I always wanted to see how things are going at that school on Which I am hoping to see next time or when YAI (Young Adult Institute) plans something and would help me schedule an appointment with them. But no matter what I will be waiting for an opportunity.

ELEVATORS AT SHEEPSHEAD BAY

BY ALLAN FRASER

It's not fair for people with disabilities to walk up the steps when there's no elevator. So there's going to be an elevator in Sheepshead Bay. There's no elevator for wheelchairs or baby strollers. It's about time they did something. Today I was at Sheepshead Bay and I had to go a long way around the construction but they're going to put two elevators, one outside and one inside.

The MTA should do more. A lot of people don't have credit cards so it's not a good idea to get rid of MetroCards, they shouldn't take those away from people with disabilities. My suggestion is to keep the MetroCards as long as you can.



Sign at Sheepshead Bay highlighting the new elevators that will be installed.

MAINSTREAM - AN INSULTING ISSUE

BY ROBERT CARDONA

Yesterday- on my Facebook page- 2 of my former- and- I now put it as former-mainstream high school friends, or should I say associates, that I have known since 1987, insulted me veryyyyyyyyyy harshly with a disability comment that was cruel and intolerable!

The 2 Loughlin alumnae graduates from the 1989 class- who graduated with my fiancée- Roshanna Dunnings- had posted a picture of themselves hanging out at a lounge having drinks. I, as I wanted to fit in with them since the Loughlin days, put in bold face letters in a comment back to them AS I HAVE SAID TO YOU A MLLION TIMES WHEN YOU BOTH KEEP POSTING THIS INFO- THAT I WANT TO JOIN YOU FOR YOUR GUYS NIGHT OUT-but one of them wrote back "playa, you don't drink" with the insult "you also have a curfew." And he put a big smile sticker with a big tear on it. The minute I saw it the bawling appeared with me. I can't believe how these Loughlin people can STILLLLLLLLLL be cruel and insensitive at their grown ages- even though I am still in touch with the "for real" Loughlin folks- like Nancy and Roshanna!

REMEMBERING JUDY HEUMANN

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ



Judith Heumann

She was known as the “mother of the disability rights movement,” Heumann became an internationally recognized leader for her instrumental work pushing for historic legislation, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act. As reported by Huff Post reporter By Shruti Rajkumar. March 4, 2023. Judy Heumann passed away at the age of 76. Who was she? Ms Heumann according to the “Washington Post “She’s considered the mother of disability rights - and she’s a badass” And she was! Here are some of her accomplishments/stuggles which have been an inspiration to all people with disabilities. Straight from her website judyheumann.com

“She was an internationally recognized leader in the disability rights community. She had been instrumental in the development and implementation of legislation, such as Section 504, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which have been advancing the inclusion of disabled people in

the US and around the world and fighting to end discrimination against all those with disabilities.”

To add going back to the website: “In the year 1983, she co-founded the World Institute on Disability (WID) with Ed Roberts and Joan Leon, as one of the first global disability rights organizations founded and continually led by people with disabilities that works to fully integrate people with disabilities into the communities around them via research, policy, and consulting efforts. She currently serves on a number of non-profit boards, including the American Association of People with Disabilities, the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Humanity and Inclusion, Human Rights Watch, United States International Council on Disability, and Save the Children.”

We must never forget for every movement there’s women! Abolitionist movement to end slavery Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman who were disabled, Judy Heumann joins the brunch.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS 2023

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS

The Special Olympics were held in Berlin, Germany from June 17-25.

Approximately 7,000 Olympics athletes and unified partners (trainers and partners) from around 190 countries competed in 24 sports. There were more than 3,000 coaches and 20,000 volunteers.

The Special Olympics are for athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Some of the sports were swimming, tennis, judo, and football (soccer).

They had an opening ceremony like the regular Olympics.

BMT SHUTTLE RIDES

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

I went to the BMT Shuttle Train at New York Transit Museum between 18th Avenue to Kings Highway in Brooklyn on Thursday June 15th, 2023. The BMT Train started back in 1916 from MTA New York City Transit. My mother, sister and I never rode on a BMT Shuttle Train before. I have a disability, but this time I did ride on the BMT Shuttle Train from New York Transit Museum. I took pictures and videos of the BMT Shuttle Train on my phone. They've got a lot of fans inside BMT Shuttle Train. I posted the BMT Shuttle Rides on my Facebook and Instagram on my phone. We are celebrating the BMT Shuttle Rides from New York Transit Museum.



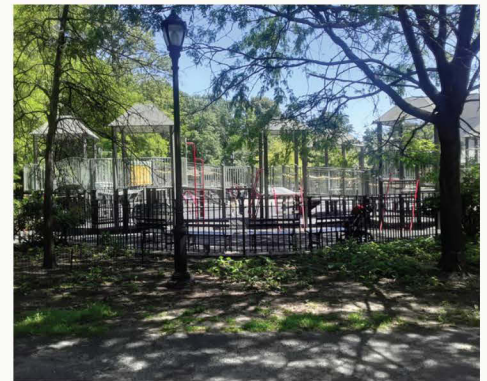
Old BMT train car

PROSPECT PARK

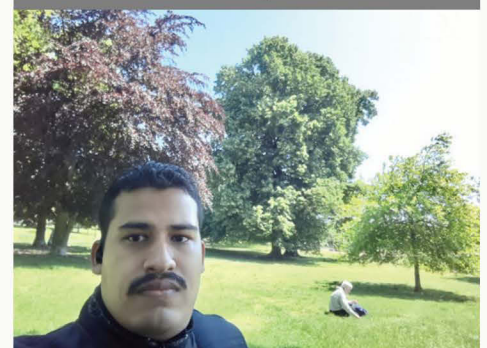
BY ORLANDO JUAREZ

Prospect Park, one of my favorite places of my childhood when I was little, I often went there for fun and good exercises with some of my uncles. They took me to two of the playgrounds, the first one was third street playground, the other one is harmony park which is located at 11th 10th and 9th street, and at the same place is the location for the Lena home bandshell. Prospect Park is so special because there is even a lake and there's even the carousel, the Brooklyn Zoo, the botanic garden, and a historical place called the Lefferts Historic House.

Prospect Park is also where my family and I spend time for barbeque and picnic, and sometimes on a Saturday we walk around the park loop for an hour which is fun because we got to see a lot of areas especially the tennis center, parade ground, and the grand army plaza, and there are other interesting places such as Drummer's Grove, Baier Music Island, and the Nethermead, a rolling meadow and a perfect place for dogs to have fun as well for picnicking, walking and birdwatching. I really enjoyed Prospect Park when I was little and this year, I got the chance to go back to Prospect Park when I had to do something for YAI. But it was fun to do a little sightseeing, I hope I have another chance to go back next time.



Top: playground in Prospect Park. Bottom: Orlando selfie in the park



LEVEL THE CURVE 4TH ANNUAL THISABILITY ART SHOWCASE

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

This past July 29th, in the neighborhood of East Harlem (where this reporter resides) at El Barrio Artspace located at 215 E 99th St, New York, NY 10029 the organization “Level the Curve” held their 4th annual art showcase. What is this organization? Let’s let them tell you.

“At Level The Curve, we aim to make everyday life easier for people by creating products that adapt to the customers’ needs and wants, and at a low price. The result is a consumer-oriented approach which caters specifically to, as our name suggests, ‘leveling the curve’ as well as the ‘playing field’ for the disabled community.”

I say, “You’ll be amazed their work!”

Eli Ramos Master of Ceremonies, co-founder and COO at Level the Curve, INC sadly got a spinal cord injury at age 20. Yet that did not stop him from his artistic activities. A keyboardist for Digital Dharma, and electro funk band, a graduate from the City University of NY with a degree in International Studies, Eli also moonlights as a stand up comedian and, and he writes poetry. He said, “The joy of Level the Curve is that we get to showcase our work and most importantly show each other our work. We support each other.”

As this reporter took a short walk around I spoke with other artists and was greeted really nicely. It’s almost as if they read my mind. They seemed to know I was a reporter, and they knew that I was a gentleman who was interested.

Another artist I spoke to was Annalisa Rivera Franz. Annalisa is a multidisciplinary artist who’s work focuses from acrylic painting, to photography and digital arts. In the 2002 she was diagnosed with the illness Hypermobility Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (hEDS). She stated proudly “Creating art is not only a joy.” Annalisa also has a website www.dabblerscorner.com

The next artist this reporter spoke to was Tonya Capers who lives in Harlem. She states proudly “Where I was born and raised!” Tonya has transverse myelitis, and she has been drawing/painting since she was a kid. She tells it like it is “To keep busy, I do anything that involves creativity, whether its painting on a canvas or a on a jeans jacket.” You can see from the photo that Tonya she speaks the truth!

One of the joys of this event is that everything is done/performed by people with disabilities. Besides the arts, the performances... even the food is catered by people with disabilities.

Alejandro Courtney is a resident of El Barrio Artspace, and he uses food to create Culinary Art. He stated “My Family was always active in the kitchen and always before going to bed I like to watch my favorite chefs on TV.” Not only is Alejandro a great cook, but he’s also a competitive gamer/sportsman who participates in tournaments. He’s a founding member of the Quad Gods an adaptive e-sports team.



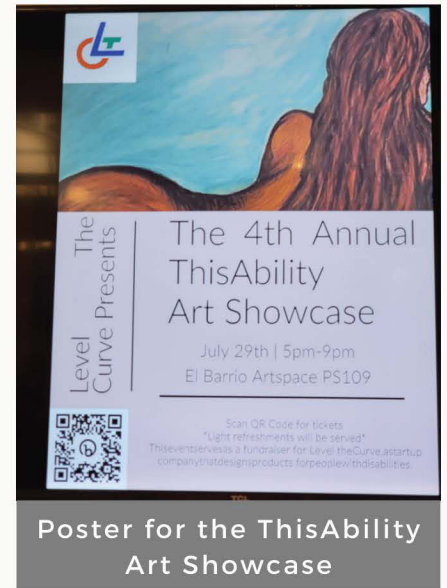
Sign for Level The Curve with logo.

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These artists are an inspiration to all who want to express their talents. Their disabilities have not stopped them from learning and doing new things. German Rodriguez who is Latin American is an artist, who like Eli Ramos, is living with spinal cord injury, which he received while working in construction in the Dominican Republic. "I always had a passion/love for art. So, after my injury I had to do things my way to provide for my wife and family." Through recreational therapy provided for him at the Coler-Goldwater facility he learned skills and became a talented illustrator. Art was truly his calling. If you sees his work you'll see dazzling portraits and landscapes created with charcoal and paper.

There's a saying in Spanish "Mi Casa es su Casa"(My home is your home). With El Barrio Artspace and Level the Curve who have worked together the last 4 years, one can be sure this reporter who lives close by, will be back to see other inspirational shows by LEVEL THE CURVE!
215 East 99th Street New York, NY, 10029



Poster for the ThisAbility Art Showcase

NO LONGER WANTING TO BE FAMOUS!

BY ROBERT CARDONA

For the disability population- whomever wanted to mainstream to anyyyyyyyyyyyy kind of reality show- even on the BET network-THINK AGAIN, MY FRIENDSSSSSSSSSS!

I was watching the reality show- "college hill: celebrity edition"- featuring Brandy's brother- that womanizing Ray J and I'm going to describe further in details about that as my article further goes in depth. Ray J, basket ball great Lamar Odom and a few other cruel-as-ever celebs were being trifflin' to former Cosby Show child star- Stacey dash- who played 1 of Lisa Bonet's high- school friends in 1985. Her movie and tv career have now taken a baddddddd nose dive. Ray J and all of the rappers were sooooooooooooo foul to Stacey- in next week's show- she's gonna be taken out of Ray J's house in an ambulance- meaning-SHE HAD A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN, YALLLLL!!!

To anyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy of the people at YAI or any agencies who want to go out on the outside world to work on certain shows- there are limitations, in most cases, as to what actors, actresses can do depending on their disability. I personally have wanted to be on Wild-n-Out, House of Payne, and anyyyyyyyy of the Tyler Perry sitcoms or dramas- but- after witnessing this situation with Stacey on College Hill, I am now having second thoughts on becoming into mainstream society. Matter of fact- manyyyyyyyy of my long-time friends, including my long-time buddy- and- 1 of our newsletter committee group members- Steven Holden- was afraid if I had gone on Wild-n-Out I would have been subject for ridicule!

Guys-think VERYYYYYYYYYYY CLOSELYYYYY about your job move!

ABOUT CORA

BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS

Here is the interview of my niece, Jessica, where I asked about how she rescued Cora when she was in Puerto Rico.

Why were you in Puerto Rico, Jessica?

I went to Puerto Rico on a vacation with my friend, Cathryn. We toured around a few different places on the island including Rincon and its beautiful beaches, the rainforest called El Yunque, and the capital city of San Juan.

When were you there?

I visited Puerto Rico in March of 2022.

Where did you find Cora the puppy?

I found Cora outside of a Duane Reade drug store in the Condado neighborhood of San Juan. She was on the sidewalk looking for some water and food! I spotted her when I was going in to buy some water and snacks.

How did you take care of her in Puerto Rico?

Once I found Cora on the street, I knew I needed to help her. The first thing I did was take Cora to the vet. She was only about 6 weeks old and had some patches of fur missing. The vet figured out she had a roundworm infection and prescribed her some medication. At the vet, she didn't have a name, so we called her Carla. We didn't pick the name Cora - short for Corazon - until a little later! The second thing I did was I went to Walmart to buy Cora some food, pee pads, a pet carrier, a blanket, a toy and a collar! After I had all of her supplies, I carried her in my bag and she became a tourist in San Juan! She came to lunch, visited the fort and even went to a bar!

How did you get her home?

The vet was able to give me flying papers for Cora which let me register her with the airline. I paid for Cora to be added to the plane, and she flew back to New York. She was in her carrier under the seat in front of me for take off and landing, but she sat in my lap for most of the flight. She even went through TSA!

Did you or she have problems with her at home?

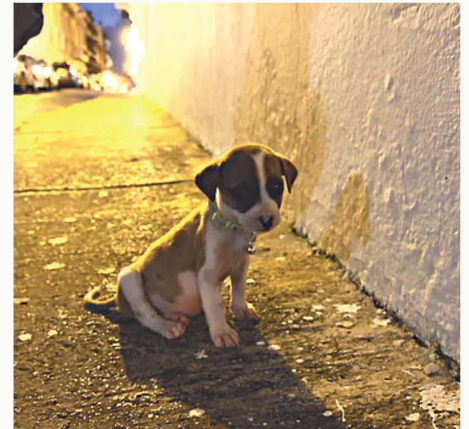
Cora was a very little puppy, so she was not house broken when we got home. It took a very long time for Cora to learn that she should go to the bathroom outside of the apartment! The process to vaccinate and spay Cora also took a long time when we were back in New York. It also took a while for my two cats, Bentley and Macy, to get used to having a playful puppy in the house. Although it took some time, Cora is now well adjusted to her life in New York with two cat sisters and tons of loving family to cuddle!

Do you think of Cora as a "rescue" dog?

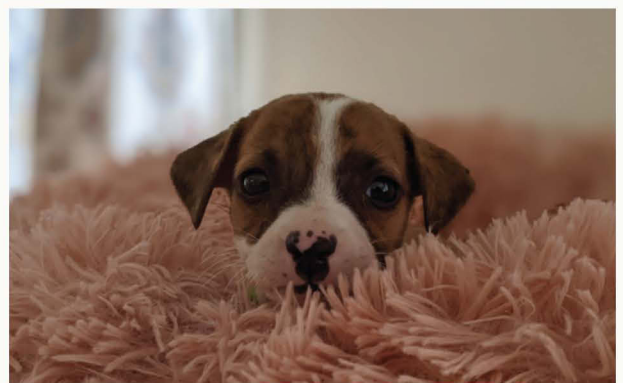
Yes! Absolutely! Cora is a rescue dog who initially was living on the street. While I didn't adopt Cora through the traditional methods of going to a shelter, I did adopt her as my own once I saw her on the sidewalk.

Does Cora have a disability?

Cora does not have a disability that I am aware of.



Cora as a tiny puppy on the street in Puerto Rico



Cora snuggled on a fluffy blanket

GRADUATION

BY ALLAN FRASER

Friday the 25th of August I just graduated because I passed the test for my new job at Goodwill. We can't cheat, it's just like in school. It's about what I did hands-on. They asked me questions about my work like, Do I use a buffer? Do I clean the tables? I did very, very good. I was happy I graduated. I am a Basic Certified Custodial Technician. That certificate means I can use it for any jobs. I got the certificate for my new job at Goodwill.



Allan with a trophy and certificate for Basic Certified Custodial Technician

NEW YORK BUS FESTIVAL

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD



A bus at the festival

We went to the New York Bus Festival at the New York Transit Museum at the Brooklyn Bridge Park by the water, me and my mother on Saturday June 10th, 2023. The New York City Bus started back in 1933. Today there are brand new city busses from New York City Transit. I have a disability, but I travel, training by myself on the city bus to check on my phone before I leave what time the bus is coming and how long to get there on time on time. My favorite city busses are B54, B62, B61, B57, B38, B25, B26, B41, B82, B100, B44, B6, and B83 from New York City Transit in Brooklyn. We will be celebrating the 90th birthday from New York City Bus Transit. I took the pictures for New York Bus Festival last month. I'm sending them to my Facebook and Instagram of New York Bus Festival. We took the ride on the Metro Bus before. They've got wheelchair and walker capabilities now for riding on the Metro Bus. We went to New York Transit Museum to see the all-time city bus favorite. I learned transportation safety. We all had a good time at the New York Bus Festival.