

# SELF ADVOCATES NEWSLETTER

DON'T TALK ABOUT IT, BE ABOUT IT

## ASK AMELIA

iHOPE student Amelia loves giving advice. She chose the words in bold below using her communication device. Her support staff then used partner assisted scanning to form complete sentences based on the phrases she picked. If you want Amelia's advice, please send your questions to [AskAmeliaSellman@gmail.com](mailto:AskAmeliaSellman@gmail.com) and use the subject "Ask Amelia."



Dear AskAmelia,

*I had an operation on my feet. I could not go to school for a loooooong time. Now it's time to go back! However, I feel scared to go back to school. I think that when I go back everyone at school will treat me differently. I'm scared. What should I do?*

From,  
One foot out the door



To One Foot Out the Door,

**Hello, how's it going?** Did you eat any yummy foods while at home? Don't exhaust yourself worrying about school. Maybe talk to your parents and tell them "**You are not listening to me.** I want to wait to go back." Or you can talk to your teachers and classmates and tell them, "**I'm embarrassed, and I need to talk to you about something**". Let them know that are feeling **depressed and scared** about returning to school. School might be **totally the worst** in the beginning but I'm sure by the end of the week you'll be **totally stoked!** Remember that everyone at school **loves you!**

Nice writing to you!  
AskAmelia <3

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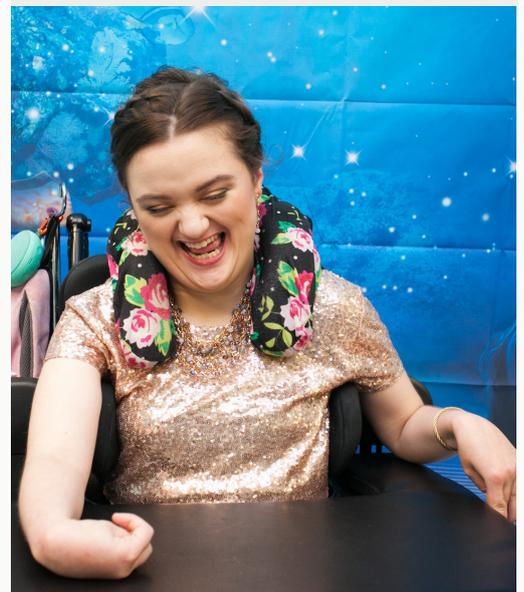
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**Parents do not  
have X-Ray  
eyes to see  
what you're  
feeling on the  
inside.**

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*Dear AskAmelia,*

*I really don't know what to do! My boy best friend really wants to be popular. He is super smart, so he thought he could gain popularity by doing the most popular boy's homework. He has been writing all of his assignments. However, it is not working. My best friend is still not popular! I feel that he is being taken advantage of by this boy! I want to help him. I want to tell someone, but I don't want him to get into trouble. What should I do?*

*From,  
Concerned to help*



Dear Concerned to Help,

**Hi there! How's it going?** Maybe you can help your friend look at his situation in a different way. Help him **read a story** where someone is being used, like Cinderella. **If** he does not stop on his own, then you should **go** to the teacher.

Goodbye,  
AskAmelia



*Dear AskAmelia,*

*My parents are great, and I love them, and I know they love me. However, when it comes to understanding my feelings and needs as I grow up, they don't get it! I try to tell them my wants and needs but they minimize my feelings. How can I get them to listen to me? What can I do?*

*From,  
Parents Just Don't Understand*



Dear Parents Just Don't Understand,

**Hi there!** I'm **jogging** right alongside you because I can relate to how you feel. Sit your parents down and tell them you want to talk. Parents do not have **X-Ray** eyes to see what you're feeling on the inside. Let them know that **they are you not listening to you**. Maybe they need a **hearing aid**. Be firm with them. Tell them that their ignorance of your feelings hurts so bad that you feel you need an **ice pack** to numb the pain.

Hope this helps,  
Ask Amelia

## INTERVIEW WITH JUDY RYBAK, CBS NEWS, 48 HOURS PRODUCER.

INTERVIEWED BY JANICE MCPHILLIPS



### What college did you attend?

I attended Syracuse University because I knew I wanted to be a television journalist and storyteller, and Syracuse had one of the best broadcast journalism programs in the country. I applied to several schools around the

country, but the S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse was my first choice. When I was accepted into that program, I jumped at the chance and have never regretted it.

### What Internship did you do?

I did several internships with the same show in two different cities. The show “PM Magazine” was syndicated and aired all over the country, but each city had its own local hosts and production staffs. My first internship with PM Magazine was in New York City the summer after my sophomore year. My good friend and classmate Brad Larosa (who would go on to work for Barbara Walters Specials for many, many years after we graduated) recommended me for that internship. It was a position that Brad had held the summer before me.

The summer after my junior year, I stayed in Syracuse and interned with PM Magazine at the local station. I continued to intern for the Syracuse PM Magazine staff through my senior year, and was even given the opportunity to produce and write my own segment. I learned a great deal about writing and producing for television as a student at Newhouse, but I learned much more through my internships. There is nothing like on-the-job training. By the time I graduated, I had so much experience and so many contacts within the PM Magazine network that I was offered a job working for PM Magazine in Providence, Rhode Island. One of the hosts of that show was a young Matt Lauer. Surrounded by several very talented people who went on to do great things, it was as if I was being paid to attend graduate school.

### How did you get started with 48 hours?

I knew 48 Hours Executive Producer Susan Zirinsky because I had worked for her years earlier on a CBS News show called Eye to Eye With Connie Chung. In 2007, I was living in Los Angeles and working freelance and Zirinsky

hired me to help 48 Hours research and set up cases in LA. Two years later, when I moved back to New York, I went to work for the show as a show producer, responsible for producing entire hours from start to finish. I have now been with the show full-time for nearly eight years.

After all these years, I marvel at the fact that I am extremely happy at my job and still learning and growing every day. I love the fact that every case presents its own unique challenges and lessons. It also does not hurt that Susan Zirinsky is the smartest and best boss I have ever had and that the staff at 48 Hours is top notch.

**I am extremely happy at my job and still learning and growing every day.**

### What was your first Assignment? And where?

My first assignment for 48 Hours was a murder case in Phoenix, Arizona that we called “The Stranger Beside Me.” A young man had lied to everyone in town about who he was and where he came from. He told people he was a successful graduate of Michigan University, but he was really a grafter who had not even gone to college. He even legally changed his name and obtained an Arizona driver’s license, at a time before the tragedy of 9/11, when it was much easier to fool authorities.

Based on his lies, a very successful young woman in town who actually had gone to Michigan University fell in love with this fraudster and became his girlfriend. Police believe that when she found out who this young man really was, he killed her to keep her from revealing his secret. Even though they could not find her body, homicide detectives and prosecutor Juan Martinez were able to prove that this man murdered his girlfriend. Today he is serving 25 years to life.

After I was assigned this case, I spent a month living in Phoenix and attending the trial. After the verdict, I was able to get everyone involved in the case—including the killer—to sit down for interviews with 48 Hours Correspondent Erin Moriarty.

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**When you interview people on site are you scared?**

I am not. There are only two things that scare me: Spiders and marriage.

Otherwise, I am pretty fearless. I think one of the things that make me a good producer/journalist is that I am genuinely interested in people and am not afraid to engage.

Over the course of my career I have personally interviewed many people on camera, but the great thing about working for 48 Hours is that I don't have to sit in that hot seat. I get to sit in the back of the room while cameras are rolling and watch our brilliant correspondents conduct the interviews. Leading up to that moment, my job is to make sure that the correspondents know everything they need to know about each case, and to get people to sit down across from them for interviews.

Once those interviews are done it is my job to do the heavy lifting of writing the first draft of the script, which is then open to editing by the entire team.

**When you travel to places do you know in advance where you going?**

Sometimes I know where I am going and sometimes I do not. When I am first assigned to a case, it usually starts with a trip to the city where the crime took place. The day before I am assigned that case I don't know where I am going next. Once I start work on a case, I pretty much know where I am going to be traveling to for the next six months or so. That is how long it typically takes to produce a 48 Hours case from start to finish.

**In the future are you still going to work for 48 hours? Or do something different?**

I live my life one day at a time. Right now, I am very happy working for 48 Hours. I have no idea what the future holds but remain open to all great opportunities.

One of the reasons I studied journalism in the first place is that I have always been a huge fan of another CBS News show, "Sunday Morning." I would love to contribute to that show someday. Another goal of mine is to work as an investigator for The Innocence Project. My favorite assignments for 48 Hours are the cases of wrongful conviction that we take on. I have learned so much about how wrongful convictions happen and what can be done to rectify them that I would love to be able to put that knowledge to practical use someday.

**How do you feel about the R word?**

As a writer, I am both blissfully and painfully aware of the power of words. The saying "sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never harm me" is false. I have seen words cut deep wounds and have been deeply hurt myself. Knowing that one word can leave a lasting impact, both good and bad, I chose my words carefully and thoughtfully (as much as possible), and the R word is not in my vocabulary.

**BACK TO BRAGG STREET!****BY ALLAN FRASER**

On October 8th, Columbus Day, I moved to a supportive apartment. I missed everybody at my old group home, I missed my girlfriend, so October 30th I moved back to Bragg Street on a Friday. Late afternoon I moved back. I was happy, my girlfriend Mary Klarese was happy. When I was at the supportive apartment, my roommate was making comments about group homes and it made me a little upset inside. Bragg Street makes me happy, I go on vacation with my peers and my girlfriend, we go food shopping and go to different malls on Sundays. I told my girlfriend maybe one day after we get married we could go live in a supportive apartment.



# DEFYING THE ODDS: 18 YEARS IN THE GAME; FINALLY RECEIVED THE AWARD

BY CAR'MELO GRAU-PUIG

What a difference a victory makes... I can't believe that throughout the trials and tribulations I've lasted 18 years (March 31st, 2000) working at the Gramercy School. Who would've I thought I've lasted so long and look where I'm at today still standing. Many years ago, I originally got my start from going through the proper training at the YAI Manhattan PEP and I've lasted 3 month's worth of training. As I kept going, the staff were very supportive in finding me a job as a maintenance/housekeeper at Gramercy. I thought I wasn't going to get it despite having a lot of options of where it will take me. Well guess what? I received a call and announced that I got the job! Seeing is believing and yes it happened. It was definitely a miracle! On November 4th, 2018 in the last 18 years of working at the Gramercy School, I've finally received the Facility Support Staff Month award (1st time since I've received the Merit Service award on October 16th, 2013) at the ADAPT Community Network luncheon. In my opinion, this was one of the greatest achievements! I defied the odds in coming into work with a smile on my face, maintaining a clean environment, doing a lot of paperwork, being there for my co-workers when I greet them with honor, providing support and respect, and most of all, being the best of the best. Why I say that is because in the last 18 years, I continue to strive and accomplish what is put in front of me. I do not let my disability ruin my job responsibilities or my concentration, and that's what is important in setting the standards for the school. I still continue to accomplish doing a lot of presentations and speaking in front of a of people. Right now, I just go for it. I never get stage fright. I am remaining loyal to YAI by donating my time to the Self Advocacy group meetings (while holding onto positions) and training staff to trade places with the people YAI supports. In the past, I've presented at the International Conferences, as well as doing volunteer work such as selling the "Erase the R word" buttons and going to Self Advocates Newsletter committee meeting twice a month. This year was challenging, especially in the last 6 months (05/18 – 11/18). I recently got an opportunity to take part as a co-facilitator in the Manhattan Independent Living Program (ILP), alongside with Emily Gabel.



## I am remaining loyal to YAI by donating my time to the Self Advocacy group meetings

We got to train people on how to gain independence living on our own. I have to say this has been one amazing ride and I have already conquered it all. It has been a blessing and shows why I love all of this so much. It is because it takes determination and patience. A lot of work was put in front of me and doing it all proves that defying the odds is about having my voice be heard, coming up with ideas for what me and my advocates could do for the Self Advocacy group, and accepting all the changes. It allowed me to grow and not let negativity ruin my success.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the Gramercy staff for nominating to get this award. I appreciate every one of you. It has always been a pleasure seeing all of you put a smile on my face. At the school, it has always been a blessing and I'm grateful. To the rest of you from YAI, thank you for believing, supporting, and standing by me. Also, all of you have always continuously been so patient with me whenever I had these moments. All of you stood by me and I'm forever thankful. It is important to me to "Live, Love, Work, and Learn" and to carry on my legacy here at YAI. Last but not least, to ADAPT Community Network, all of you deserve the respect from me as well. Like I always say, "Y'all don't talk about it, y'all be about it and that's what's important in defying the odds!!!"

## WORKING IN CENTRAL PARK

BY FREDRICK STAINE

YAI encourages people like me to advocate for myself through situations and be independent to look for more resources to my liking. Working at Central Park Conservatory is great. I have a support system with my peers and supervisors, we encourage each other to put our minds in any goals we want to obtain and we work together as a team in any projects in the park. I really enjoy being a part of YAI and the services they provide me are very helpful.



## THANKSGIVING DINNER

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD



We had a Thanksgiving dinner at my house on Thursday, November 22nd, 2018. We were thankful for my family and friends. I am thankful for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Manhattan. I am thankful for my job and church. I am also thankful for Thanksgiving dinner.

We have turkey, stuffing, collard greens, mac and cheese, ham, cranberry sauce, sweet potato pie, cornbread, pumpkin pie, and fruit salad. I am learning how to make pumpkin pie. I will learn how to cook my own turkey for Thanksgiving. I'm going to learn how to read a recipe for Thanksgiving. I am learning how to set the table. I am learning how to decorate my door and window for Thanksgiving. I am also learning how to make chocolate creme pie, fruit salad, and cornbread.

I called my sister, niece, and aunt over for Thanksgiving dinner at my house. I am thankful for exercise. Then, I called my cousin over for dinner.

# CHAT WITH CAR'MELO

## INTERVIEW WITH JILLIAN HILOWITZ

On 12/11/2018, I had the privilege to interview one of the members of the YAI Advancement and Communications team and that happens to be Jillian Hilowitz who's now going on three months with the agency. In my opinion, I'm so glad to have her taking part in this interview. She has been working very hard and discussing what marketing ideas she can bring to the table and promotion so let's pay attention to what she has to say...

### What made you want to work for YAI?

I really enjoyed their content strategy. I looked them up via website and social media, and I really liked how their strategy to promote awareness is by posting people's stories. Whether it be someone we support talking about achieving a goal, or someone developing their career, I really enjoyed their whole strategy. Before this, I actually didn't know of YAI, so I feel like the stories helped in terms of finding out about YAI and seeing all that they do.

### What's your educational background before coming to this agency?

I went to Fairleigh Dickenson, which is in Madison, New Jersey. There, I studied Communications and had a Minor in Public Relations. Then shortly after graduating, I started interning at Lexis Nexis in their Legal Marketing Department reaching out to different potential clients, trying to get them interested in our pay-per-lead product. After a couple of months they promoted me full-time to be a Product Coordinator. I was there for about 2 years. After that, I was working at a start-up marketing medical imaging for discounted prices. Since they were such a new start up, my job was to really promote brand new awareness to get their name out there and get potential organizations interested in partnering with us. I was there for about a year as their only marketing head. I wanted more of a structure, so after that I then went to Distinguished Programs, where I was for about 3 years as a Marketing Specialist. My responsibilities included planning and sending out e-mail campaigns, and again promoting brand awareness; planning events, figuring out their social media strategy and implementing it, building sales collateral, and working closely with the sales team. Now I'm here!



Jill Hilowitz with Car'Melo

### What's your job title?

At YAI, I'm a marketing and PR manager so what that means is I'm doing everything from planning e-mail campaigns, to creating collateral. I'm also working with different programs to figure out their marketing strategies and plan how they can increase their brand awareness and increase gifts. I am also building and planning press releases when needed and figuring out a publicity strategy.

### Who recommended you for the job?

Actually, no one. I applied through LinkedIn and then shortly after applying, someone got in touch with me. I was at the airport when this person called, the conversation went well, and after that then I met Sarah Schwed.

## working with different programs to figure out their marketing strategies

### While you still getting adjusted to YAI what ideas are you bringing to the table?

Over the past 3 months, I've been learning a lot about YAI, their strategy, and their different branding guidelines. I have been creating collateral for our different programs such as working with both Premier and Employment to develop a strategy for promotional items. I have also helped with sending out many e-mail campaigns and trying A/B testing which is new something of YAI hasn't done yet. A/B testing is basically the sending out of the same e-mail campaign but with two different versions and seeing which version does better. I have also been helping the team with copyediting, so any content that goes out, making sure that everything is correct and up-to-date.

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**What are your thoughts about the R word?**

I'm totally with you guys on trying to eliminate it. I think it's a very ignorant term and sometimes you can't help with the way people act. I'm totally up for teaming up with you guys and trying to eliminate it. You can't really control people's ignorance and it just shows just by using it, they're low in class and they weren't brought up properly.

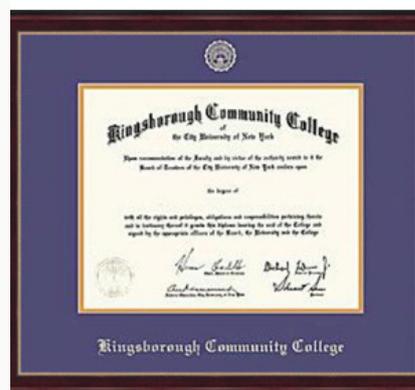
**What advice would you give a person with a disability?**

I say dance like no one's watching because people are going to judge you either way, so why not be yourself and stop worrying about people think. Just be you!

## MY FANTASTIC YEAR AT KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BY TERRY BRYSON JR.

On June 13th, I will be graduating from Kingsborough Community College with a degree in Child Psychology. I am looking forward to better things after I finish completing my college education. I will continue to work with children with special needs. I am happy and blessed to share all my success with other people who want to try to give them a hand at college level.



In case you haven't heard, Terry Bryson will be returning to the "In My Shoes" program and Self Advocates Newsletter. Real soon, I am looking forward to coming back to the group and continuing what I stand for.

I hope to see you all real soon,  
Your Friend and Teammate  
Terry Bryson, Jr

## HOLIDAY PARTY

BY KENNETH YOUNGBLOOD

I went to the holiday party at my job with people from my group home. The party was at YAI Cobble Hill in Brooklyn, New York on December 12th. To get there, I took the B61 bus.

We were wearing Christmas clothes including sweaters or ugly sweaters with red and green. I wore my Christmas hat.

I learned how to wrap my Christmas gift for the Secret Santa. The party had food, drinks, candy, snacks, and music. I learned how to dance at the holiday party. There was a lot of dancing and having fun.

I had a great time. There was a lot of singing Christmas songs and having a good time. I exchanged gifts with one person during the Secret Santa.



## AS ALWAYS CHALLENGING

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

Happens all the time. This reporter says “Should I, should I not, maybe, not sure, I don’t know?” Then all of a sudden, here I am performing for The Lorenz Dance Studio Christmas Show that took place December 16th, 2018. The show was at Astoria Manor in the borough of Queens. There were two dance performances: Bachata and Salsa.



Bachata, as described on Lorenz Dance Studio’s website “Bachata is a form of music and dance that originated in the countryside and rural marginal neighborhoods of the Dominican Republic. Its subjects are usually romantic; especially prevalent are tales of heartbreak and sadness.” My Dance partner Rosh Valdez, an instructor, dance partner, and proud supporter, said “You’ll be great! You got this! Relax and enjoy, remember me and the studio is here to support.”

The second performance was Salsa. A little more challenging as described on Lorenz’s website “For the mood of Mambo, just think Havana in its heyday, and the famous Palladium dancers of NYC in the '40s,



'50s and '60s. Shines refer to the fancy steps that partners do when they break away from each other to dance separately.” Jose, the choreographer, and Avery, my dance partner for the Salsa performance, said collectively “Remember to be confident, believe in yourself.” Avery added, “Practice helps. Most importantly relax, practice and the memory will help, you have us to help you.”

The day of the show went well! Smiles and compliments from everyone! “You did good Ismael!” To add the food, the people, and the other dance teams from Lorenz: “EXCELLENTE/BRAVISIMO!” Regarding the summer show, we’ll see.

## ACCESSIBILITY AND THE MTA

BY MICHAEL HOWARD



Every time I go down to the town halls at 2 Broadway, MTA-NYC Transit President Andy Byford made a promise to make every station accessible in the next 10 years. But I told them some stations need new elevators, like Grand Central 42nd St., Jamaica Center, and Court Street/Borough Hall. They’re dirty and filthy and they need to upgrade them.

I use the subway every day. Transit should understand that there are a lot of people with disabilities and elevators are good to have and can be used for other stuff like strollers, heavy packages, and luggage. In my old job when I had to move heavy packages, I sometimes had to use the escalators. I pray by 2029 every station will be accessible.

# THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

## YEARS AFTER THE ADA

BY ISMAEL NUNEZ

George Herbert Walker Bush (June 12, 1924 – November 30, 2018) served as the 41st president of the United States from 1989 to 1993. Around the time of his administration, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed. On July 26, 1990, as reported by Truth Out's Kara Mannor on December 11th, 2018, "President George H.W. Bush signed into the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Introduced into the United States Congress in 1988, the ADA is widely recognized and commemorated by disabled people as landmark civil rights legislation and as the culmination of decades of grassroots organizing by disabled people and their allies."



ADA  
Americans with  
Disabilities Act

**the ADA is widely recognized and commemorated by disabled people as landmark civil rights legislation and as the culmination of decades of grassroots organizing by disabled people and their allies**

Yet what many have to realize is that the bill was signed after many people with disabilities were demanding and demonstrating for years. History of laws/amendments passed is the case of activism. Let's turn the clock back!

Here are other notable causes where activism has played a major role:

1. Fight for the Abolition of Slavery. One of the leaders was Harriet Tubman who had a disability. She was epileptic.
2. Women's right to vote.

It's hard to believe after the American Revolution, there was talk of "All Men are Equal", yet women were not given the right to vote until the early 1920's. For years, women were arrested and were victims of harassment during demos.