

Monthly tips and resources featured in **What's Next?** are created for young adults, their families, and supporters who are exploring options for life after high school in Indiana.

Adria and Michael share tips on independent living

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Adria and Thomas

In [October's issue of *What's Next?*](#), we asked you to send questions about independent living to our colleagues Michael Ely and Adria Nassim.

Thanks to our readers for reaching out! As promised, here are Adria's and Michael's responses.

What was your educational path, and how did it prepare you for an independent life?

Both Michael and Adria had similar educational paths. "I was in the public schools," Michael recalls, and "learned what everybody else did. I had a [student] geometry tutor in high school [that] I knew [because] we went to the same elementary school together." His academic success prepared him well for Ivy Tech.

Like Michael, Adria also attended public schools, receiving both special and general education services. "I received a lot of tutoring as a child to work on life skills such as budgeting and handwriting," she says. Tutoring also helped Adria prepare for the math portion of the Graduating Qualifying Exam (GQE) (which has since been replaced with Indiana's end-of-course assessments and the state's graduation pathways).

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What steps did you take to enter and attend college that could benefit potential students?

“I took the Compass [college entrance exam] to get into Ivy Tech,” Michael recalls. Not only did the exam prove his readiness for postsecondary education, “I did so well on the English part [that] I got to skip a class,” he says. (Ivy Tech now uses Accuplacer.)

In addition to the tuition assistance he received from Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation, one of the “accommodations I had at Ivy Tech,” he says, was “to have my books scanned into Kurzweil [a screen reading program].”

Adria notes that she gained a lot of help while in college from two personal assistants who helped her learn how to handle tasks such as packing, doing the laundry, or going to grocery or department stores. She also received on-campus tutoring support, which is available free of charge to all students with a documented learning or physical disability.

She cites the positive social benefits from her involvement with the student newspaper and recommends checking out the campus counseling services should you need them.

What can you tell us about your employment experience?

Michael works part time for the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community in Bloomington, Indiana. “I learned how to work on pdfs to make them accessible for people with disabilities who use screen readers,” he says. As his employer, IIDC paid for his pdf accessibility training. Michael adds, “I like what I am doing.”

Adria parlayed her internships and experience at the IU student newspaper into a columnist job at the Bloomington *Herald-Times*. Like Michael, she now also works part time for the IIDC, where she gives talks on autism and learning disabilities and writes a monthly blog, [Adria's Notebook](#), which focuses on independent living and community involvement in teens and young adults with disability.

What's Next? is a project of the Center on Community Living and Careers and the Indiana Department of Education.

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