Dimitrios Kouniaris

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To the attention ofMr. Finley Lindberg:

Dear Mr. Finley Lindberg:

 I saw your email on the NABS list serve, and I wanted to give you some information about the Louisiana Center for the Blind. I know that the decision to go to training is a big one, and one that should not be taken lightly. Going to training takes a lot of commitment, strength, patients, and willingness. You have to be prepared for the challenges, and all of the experiences and emotions that you will go through during training. In this letter I am going to explain to you in more detail my experience at LCB, and what to expect and a day to day of what it will be like. I again appreciate your drive to go through this.

 This training will change your life a lot. Not only will you learn the skills to make you a independent person you will learn so much more about your self. I personally went to training because I knew that I would not have my parents to depend on all of the time. Not only that, but at that time my parents were going through their fare share of issues, and I wanted to be prepared for the worse. I also wanted to be prepared for if a day comes to where my vision does get worse. I became involved with the National Federation of the Blind in 2010. When I attended the STEP program at LCB. That summer changed my life for the better, and I was determined to sharpen up my skills so I could become a independent blind person, and eventually become a productive member of society. I remember very well having this conversation with my mom. At first she didn’t;t understand why I wanted to go for 9 months for training, and further more she didn’t understand why we had to where blind folds and such. I had to explain to her that I had to do this for me, and that I was not leaving for good. I explained that I needed this and I did want to be independent, and be successful. Eventually she understood my perspective, and she was supportive of me attending training.

 I remember it like it was yesterday when I started training. I was nervous, and I felt so many emotions. I was asking my self things like how am I going to make it through this 9 month training? Am I ready for this? I remember sitting in the office doing the paperwork, and I knew that this 9 months was going to change my life in so many ways. One can never be prepared all of the way for this. You can go through the emotions, and the process, but until you actually go through it you can’t process it. That is where I was. I learned very quickly that I had to channel all of them, and take it one day at a time. I personally remember going to Pam’s office a few times crying because some days were so hard. I remember very well Ms. Pam always encouraging me, and listening to what I had to say with lots of love, and concern. I can say that about all of the staff there. They all are truly dedicated to helping the students succeed through the program. I call them my 2nd family.

 When you go to LCB the 1st week for you might feel overwelming for you. You will feel many emotions, but as I said before you are in good hands. That week is spend doing paperwork, and you doing basic evaluations for your classes, and getting set up. The number 1 thing to understand is that you are their for you. YOu are working at your own pace and you determine how long you are going to be there for. So for example in kitchen you are asked what things you know how to do already. If items need attention right away the staff will work with you. In cane travel you are taught proper cane technique. You are taught how to get to your classes, and traveling in the building. In computers you are shown how to personalize your computer and Mr. Jack will discuss other things with you. In wood shop Mr. JD will explain the role of the class and the dues and don’ts. You start off with basic measuring and move up to cutting. In braille Ms. Bre will get your reading speed, and you and her will come up with what you want to work on.

 You have classes from Mon-FRI from 8:00AM -12PM &from 1:00PM-5PM. On Tuesdays and Thursdays you have seminar. Seminar on Tuesdays is from 10:AM-12:00PM, and on Thursdays from 1:00PM-3:00PM. You will also be assigned an advisor. With this person you can meet with him or her to discuss issues related to training, and some personal stuff. That person is there to help you. You will be given $210 every month. This amount may change if you are late frequently, fail apartment inspection, and buy items such as slates, canes ETC.

 If you have a guide dog. You may work your dog in the morning on your way to training, on brakes, during lunch, and after class. If you are going to be late you may discuss with Mrs. Pam to check on your dog for you. You and Mrs. Pam can arrange where to put your dog so your training can go as smooth for you as possible. Mrs. Pam and the staff are their to make sure that you succeed, and to make sure that training is working out for you, and to help you if issues do cone up.

 I hope that this information has been helpful. As I stated before in the beginning of this letter ones decision to go to training is a hard one, and one that requires a lot of thinking and being ready for that next step, and journey. I strongly believe that you will gain so much from training, and that it will change your life like it did mine. I am confident that you will succeed and that you will push through this. My advice and words of wisdom is to be patient with your self. Throw your self in to things, and get as much as you can out of training. Channel all of those emotions, and think positive. You are going to have those days where you feel that you did bad at everything, but focus on all of the good stuff that you will be doing out there.

Warm regards,

Dimitrios Kouniaris