

Horizon Hope Application E

My Horizon journey started at the annual Hackney's Fundraiser in January 2018. I must admit I was skeptical of the idea of a camp for adults with disabilities. I had never been to camp, but I imagined it to be all structured activities that I would be required to attend on a very rigid schedule, where people would treat me like a child. My parents said, "we are just going to have a burger and check it out." They obviously knew something I didn't! When I rolled into the reserved room at Hackney's it felt like a big family dinner and by the end of the night, I was filling out a camp application. I am a person with a disability who requires quite a bit of assistance and from the first moment I arrived at camp, I felt as though I were a team member being assisted by peers and not someone cared for like a small child. This was incredibly meaningful to me. Up to this point, I had never been away from home, so it was a challenge to put myself out there and rely on people I had only just met. This might not sound important to some people, but to me it was huge. It gave me the opportunity to collaborate with someone other than my parents to meet my needs. Since then, I have attended Horizon's virtual camps and events. My camp community helped me feel connected and combat the feeling of isolation during the Covid19 pandemic.

Upon starting my application for Horizon's Hope Grant, I had to decide whether to do so as a student applicant or a person with a disability because I am both. I chose a student. I am a student at City Colleges of Chicago, and I am preparing to graduate with an Associate's degree and continue my education at a four-year University. During my time at City College, I have had the opportunity to apply Horizon's mission of people with and without disabilities working together by serving on the City Colleges of Chicago Accessibility Plan Development Committee. This committee was created to improve the overall experience for students with disabilities at all seven campuses. In this role I have worked on the Culture sub-committee and argued for the creation of a Disability Studies curriculum. My leadership role on this committee has given me the opportunity to work with others to create a more inclusive college community.

I am looking forward to the next leg of my education journey at a four-year university and the opportunity to share Horizon's vision with an even greater audience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.