

Gabriel Pigeon

Tutoring Table participant & sports enthusiast

So, my name is Gabriel Pigeon and, my YMCA experience so far has been just very positive. In general, my math skills have been pretty lacking for a while, and without the just YMCA tutoring table programme that I'm in right now, I doubt I would've passed math.

Are you passing math?

Now? I am, yes. Passing. Yes, I am passing math now.

So, my YMCA journey started with swimming lessons and it may be a little odd for a blind person to be in swimming lessons, but with all the swim teachers were very accommodating and they helped me with my challenges and helped me learn how to swim in general.

The YMCA is a special place for me because it was my original introduction to sport. Because of the YMCA, I thought I could try out any other sport, even if it wasn't fully accessible to the visually impaired and blind. I wanted to try out a bunch of new things, and that was all sparked because of the YMCA and its swimming programs. My tutors have been very accepting of my disability in general, and they have been open to learning about it and how they can help me.

For example, when they're writing out a practice question for me, instead of doing it smaller on a line sheet of paper, they'll do it as large as possible on, for example, a whiteboard, which gives me more room to write as big as I need to do my math.

So, I play not professionally, but I'm on the way to playing professional goalball, which is a sport for the visually impaired and blind. Just next month I'm going up to Ontario for a provincials tournament, and I am, I've been working really hard and it was all sparked, my love for sports was sparked, with swimming at the YMCA.

I was originally a very reserved kid and didn't have a lot of energy to expend in general. It was all spent on trying to figure out what I was looking at. But with the YMCA, I've been able to expand my horizons with stuff I can do.

I never thought I would be able to swim, skate, or do any sport in general. But now that I started off with swimming, I've been able to branch out more and figure out my passions in general for sport. My future goals and aspirations are to hopefully make the Paralympic team in goalball and go into business and marketing in the future as a job.

The YMCA turned the prospect of a visually impaired person doing sports into a very real possibility. I've been able to go swimming with my friends. I've started just doing more sport. I did a triathlon a couple of years ago, which is something I never thought would be possible.

Also, passing math.