

Friends By Inclusion

By Micah Fialka-Feldman and Alex Cherup

Micah Fialka-Feldman (see picture, top), our recurring columnist who writes about issues important to him as a student with an [intellectual disability](#) attending college, writes with his friend Alex (see picture, bottom) this month about their friendship and how it started.

About four years ago, we met in a completely different way than most friends meet. We were both students at Oakland University, and very busy with school. We met after Micah posted a flyer on campus that said that he was looking for someone that wanted to help him and provide social support during and after school. Alex didn't know much about the disability community but called out of curiosity.

At our first meeting, Micah explained that he was trying to find someone to hang out with him and be a friend to him. As a person with a disability, there were services through Macomb-Oakland Regional Center that gave Micah a certain number of hours and money to pay people to help him on campus.

Alex was interested and curious and decided this was something he wanted to do. We talked about our interests and found that we were both into doing things related to politics. A film had recently been released about the struggles in Sudan and we decided to go see it.

After we talked, Alex began to worry. Our conversation had been about politics but we had not discussed our political preference. What if Micah had a different view about how the world worked? Would this affect our one-day nontraditional relationship? Would we get into arguments?

Alex thought about all of these things before we met for the second time. As Alex drove through Micah's neighborhood to pick him up, he saw a sign that said "PEACE NOW," and immediately thought "Wow, I'd like to meet those people! I have a poster in my yard that says the same thing!"



Alex looked at the address, and it looked familiar. It was Micah's house. And since then, Alex has made the same drive many, many times, and seen the same sign, and felt the same way.

Regardless of how you meet, people connect in the community and click. We met in a way unlike how most really close friends meet, but that doesn't matter. What matters is that we met on an inclusive college campus and became friends because of inclusion.