

Coping with Disabilities Through Pony

Together



We Will Make a Difference



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THE PANEL VISION:

To share how the cartoon *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* and its fans have helped improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and other special needs.

THE PANEL MISSION:

We will use examples from the show and its fans to discuss how to:

- * Dispel negative stereotypes associated with and felt by those with special needs
- * Educate participants on how friendship and mentoring can lead to a positive chain reaction in the lives of people who have special needs.
- * Learn how to recognize and respect the gray area of accessibility that is often neglected in the development of software and multimedia

About the "Coping With Disabilities Though Pony" Panelists:

Meredith Sims

Meredith wrote the inspirational animation by Silly Filly Studios, "Snowdrop" and voiced its titular character. She will discuss "Snowdrop" and its positive impact on the Special Needs community within and beyond the brony fandom. Sims will also how discuss simple additions to multimedia presentations can make them enjoyable for a larger audience.

Rachel Merryfield

Rachel is a Software Developer and Special Needs advocate who is actively working on two unique projects: *Braillemon* and "Twinkle Morningdew". Rachel will discuss the importance of developing accessible software for both home and business use. She will also present a live demonstration of her personal video game development project *Braillemon*, which is a version of Pokémon Red and Blue for the visually impaired.

Matthew Palumbo

Matthew is an aspiring children's book author who was born with a degenerative eye condition. He will discuss how he has coped with numerous obstacles in his life - from graduating from college to raising a family- while also advocating for himself and others with special needs.

Ethan Palumbo

Matthew's seven year old son enjoys watching "My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic" with his father. He will talk about what it's like growing up with a parent who is visually impaired and how what matters is not so much what dad *can't* do, but what dad *can* do.

Benjamin Platt

Ben is an aspiring writer and educator who has helped raise a younger brother with autism and a younger sister with Down's Syndrome. Ben will discuss how "My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic" has helped him build a stronger bond between himself and his sister with special needs.