

New, free website helps teens, adults with special needs make new friends

November 6 2019, by Beth Whitehouse, Newsday

Juliana Fetherman's love for her brother Michael inspired a new, free social media website to help teens and adults with autism and other special needs chat with new friends.

Fetherman, 23, of Kings Park, created MAF, which stands for Making Authentic Friendships. It allows [users](#) age 13 or older to create a profile based on their age, interests, geographic locations, diagnosis and what level they function on. Users also indicate what they like to do, such as going bowling or to the movies. They can make an avatar of themselves as well.

Then, they can connect with other users; conversation prompts within the messenger—such as, "What did you do today?"—help to initiate chats. A caregiver also can create the profile. The app is monitored from the back end for inappropriate content or users, Fetherman says, but as with any social media app, it's recommended that teenagers' parents or caregivers be aware of whom they are interacting with online.

The app currently has 300 users in 26 states and five countries, says Fetherman, who earned an MBA in May from Sacred Heart University, where she was president of the autism club. She says she wanted to combine her caring about her brother, who is 21, with her business degree.

"I thought, 'If I can think of something that is missing in his life, maybe I can make a business out of it,'" Fetherman says. She says she always has

plans to go out with friends, but her brother doesn't. "Eventually the goal is to have people meeting in person. It's more about chatting right now," Fetherman says.

More information: For more information, call Fetherman at 631-374-0518 or visit makingauthenticfriendships.com.

©2019 Newsday

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: New, free website helps teens, adults with special needs make new friends (2019, November 6) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2019-11-free-website-teens-adults-special.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--