

***Making Communication Happen
Worldwide
October 26, 2010***

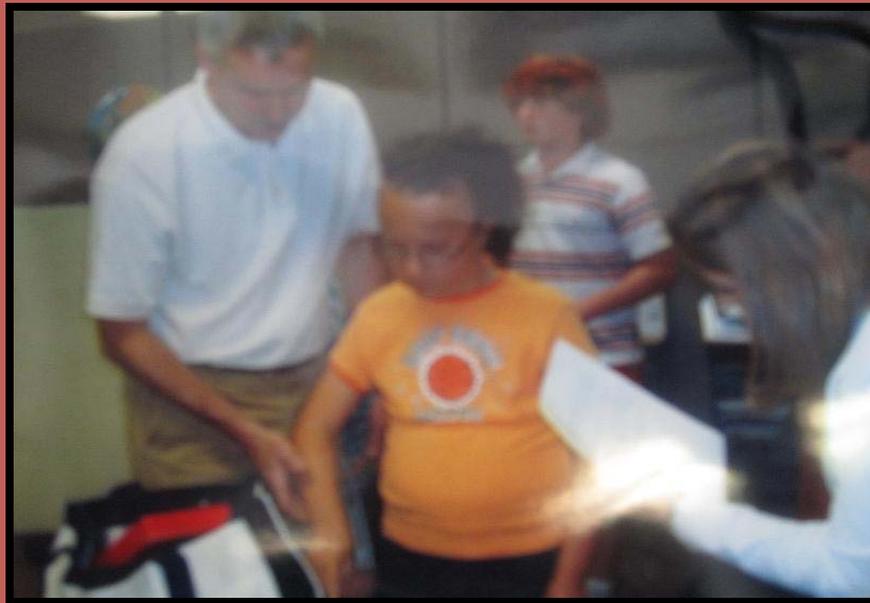
***My Life with Facilitated
Communication***

By Maisie Lajeunesse

My name is Maisie Lajeunesse, and I am currently a junior at Spaulding High School in Barre, Vermont. I have been using Facilitated Communication (FC) to communicate since I was in 4th grade.



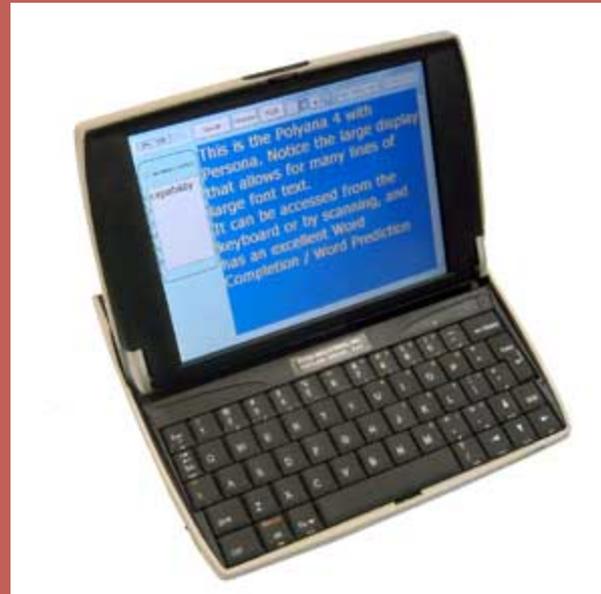
 I was first introduced to FC by Harvey Lavoy, when he came to my school. Harvey taught me how to get out my thoughts and knowledge I had accumulated over the years through typing.



Before using FC, no one knew how capable I was of communicating both my thoughts, and what I had learned in school because verbally I was unable to communicate. Since then, I have been able to participate in many classes that I probably would have skipped, if it was not for FC.



 I also use FC at home to communicate with my family. I have a Polyana, which is like a computer that I use to type on, and is able to read out loud what I type. I bring this with me everywhere so I am able to talk effectively with my family and friends.





Although I can speak to people verbally, my speech is hard to understand if you don't know me well. I have a hard time with my word retrieval; in other words, it is difficult to pull the words I want to say from my head, and to speak them verbally.

 **FC has been a huge part of my life, and has allowed me to be a very successful student. However, it hasn't been an easy road. FC requires a lot of hard work and dedication, not only from the person using it, but also from the families and facilitators who support the user. The facilitators play a huge role with the success and credibility of a user.**

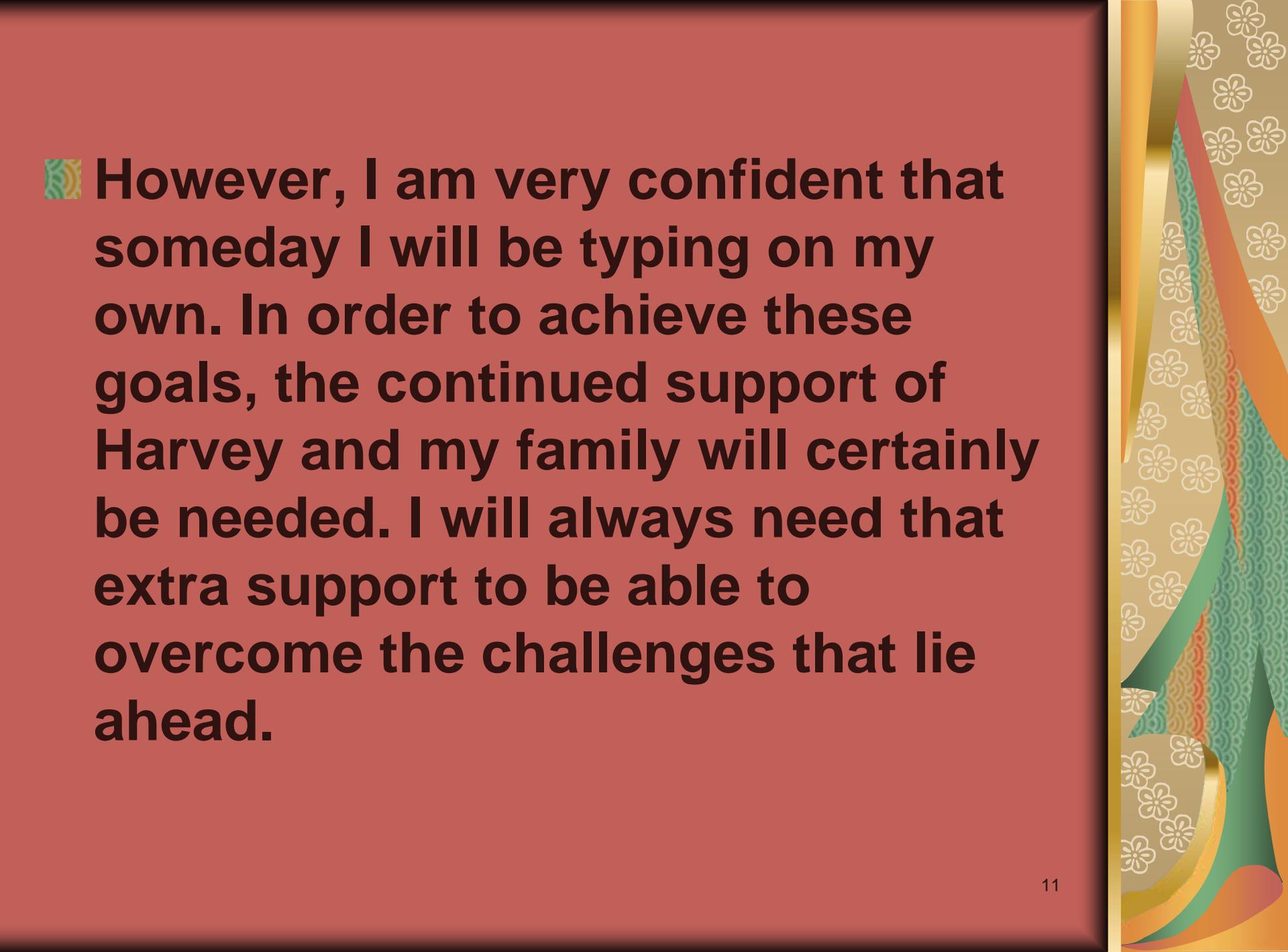
 If you don't have facilitators who can read or feel your movements, then it is hard to communicate effectively. When I first started to use FC, it was very difficult to feel comfortable with typing and controlling my movements I was making. It was hard for my facilitators as well because this was all new to us. It took a lot of practice over the years to get where I am today.



 Another part of FC which is challenging is when you are used to working with certain facilitators, and then you need to transition into working with different ones. This requires the user and new facilitators to in a way start over, which can be frustrating. I have been very lucky in that situation because all of my facilitators have worked very hard, and have been able to let me feel comfortable with them.

 I hope to continue to use FC for the rest of my life so I can communicate on my own. My ultimate goal after I graduate is to attend a community college, and in doing that, be able to type independently. I have been working some on independent typing with Harvey and my facilitators, but still have a ways to go.



A decorative floral pattern is visible on the right side of the slide, featuring a gold ribbon-like border and a background of white flowers on a light green and yellow background.

■ However, I am very confident that someday I will be typing on my own. In order to achieve these goals, the continued support of Harvey and my family will certainly be needed. I will always need that extra support to be able to overcome the challenges that lie ahead.