

## editor's message



# A Must-Read Column in the H-T



Back in early November 2013, I was contacted by a young woman named Adria Nassim who was applying for an internship at *Bloom*. Every semester we have two or three interns working at the magazine, mostly Indiana University journalism students. But Adria was different. Her email identified her as being autistic and an “Autism-Special Needs, Advocate and Speaker.”

She arrived for her interview with a service dog, a yellow Lab named Lucy, and a 30-ish fellow who I now think was probably

from the College Internship Program (CIP).

I don't remember much of what was said in that meeting except that Adria answered my questions intelligently but mainly stared down at her shoes.

I asked her to send references, which she did, and a few days later I offered her the internship — though not without reservations. With a staff here of only four, I was afraid she might be a burden. Still, I wanted to give her the opportunity, and I thought having her here would be a learning experience for us.

As it happened, Adria turned down the offer. “The more thought I gave the matter,” she wrote to me, “the more I came to the conclusion that the particular environment is not really suitable to my own needs or that of a working dog, but again thank you so much for the opportunity. It means a lot to me.”

As I hope many of you know, Adria Nassim writes a column that appears every Tuesday in *The Herald-Times*. For those of you who haven't been reading it, you are missing something special.

As Adria explains in her column, she has mild autism spectrum disorder. She grew up in rural

Indiana, attended a tiny college in Kentucky, and came here because of CIP-Bloomington, one of six CIP programs nationwide. CIP provides comprehensive postsecondary transition support services for young adults with autism and other learning differences. She took classes at IU and is a member of a sorority — both major achievements.

I have learned something from every one of Adria's columns. She has opened a window on what it is like to be autistic and let her readers peer inside. And while every autistic child and adult is different, she offers insight into common challenges and how she personally has grown. As she wrote in her February 2, 2016, column, “I want to understand my brain — why I think, act, and behave the way I do — and maybe shed a little light on the situation for parents and professionals seeking to get inside the minds of America's 1-in-45 children with autism (according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).”

If I were an acquisitions editor at a publishing house, I would be getting in touch with Adria Nassim. There are people everywhere who need to know what she is able to express.

These days I occasionally run into Adria and her dog, Lucy, on the downtown Square, usually at Darn Good Soup. The first time I was surprised that she remembered my name, addressing me respectfully as “Mr. Abrams.” I see people come up to her, greet Lucy, and engage in conversation. She seems so much more confident now, no longer looking at her shoes.

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