

INTERVIEW WITH JORGE ARISTIZABAL

My name is Jorge Aristizabal – name-sign [he demonstrates his name-sign] from South America, Colombia. I moved, in 1988, to South Carolina. [answering a question from off screen] I didn't know but I knew that I myself have Usher Syndrome, with tunnel vision, yes. At that time I got along on my own; I went to different Deaf Club events and so on and I heard about SSPs but I didn't really know much more. Then in 2004 I came to the Seabeck retreat near Seattle, Washington, and I was assigned an SSP. I was amazed; I thought it was so cool. The communication was so clear. We got along great. They gave me so much information. When I was on my own I held back and worked hard looking around; I was more isolated. But with the two of us – we were a team. They communicated with me, worked with me, and pointed out all these things that were going on around us in the environment. It was so cool. The more information I got, the more I felt interested and freed up. I love SSPs.

I remember when I first moved here, and used an SSP, I didn't know what I was doing. At first, I just told the SSP the name of the place I wanted to go to but the SSP asked me for the address. I learned fast. Now I know, I look it up, get all the information ahead of time – let's say I wanted to go to Wal-Mart, I'd look up the address and directions and have it all ready for the SSP; we'd be ready and the SSP would just drive us there. That kind of thing is important.

...I remember I was going to buy something – let's say toothpaste – and I couldn't see the color or couldn't read the label because it looked blurry, I asked the SSP and they read it off for me, so then I know. That's good. It helps. Reading is important.

...They have subs if the SSP has something come up and they have to cancel at the last minute – there's a back-up.

...Well, I have to plan it, it's up to me. If I know the SSP has a certain time limit, let's say today it's two and a half hours, and I know I want to go to 4 different stores today, I figure out what order. Then, if there's something – like it just happened one time that there was a really, really long line in the last store, and it was taking a really long time. I looked at the SSP and asked what we should do. She said that it was not a problem, she could be flexible and stretch out her time. She understood that it just happened – there was a really long line that day and it took a lot longer than I planned. They were very busy and crowded. So instead of two and a half hours it ended up being three hours. The SSP was flexible and gave me the time – so it depends. I'll do something for her.

One time I was all ready to go on time and the SSP didn't come. I waited and waited but the SSP didn't come. So, what could I do? I went on my own to the store and bought a few things, came home and put them away – still no SSP. Then two hours

after I got home the SSP showed up. She was very sorry and said she forgot. So we chuckled and then went ahead and went shopping and got all the rest of the things I needed -- so I went twice that day.

...Well, when I first moved here I got great a SSP. He was Deaf, signed ASL fluently and it was great but after a while, he stopped working for me because it was too far. I live in the south part of the city and he lived in the north end. I was disappointed. Then I got a second SSP. It was not at all what I expected. They missed appointments again and again; I was not satisfied. I decided to change SSPs. After that, the SSPs have been fine. It's important to be comfortable, that there is a good match between the DB person and the SSP, yes.