

NCC grad Nick Languirand finds discipline and community in martial arts after earning degree

*Nick Languirand—Instructor at Inner Dragon Martial Arts
Nashua Community College
Associate of Business in Marketing, 2008*

Because of his physical disability, Nick's decision on where to attend college came with a few additional factors to consider.

"Since I'm disabled and also have a slight learning disability, I didn't feel that a massive campus would be the best fit for me to be successful."

Although living close to Nashua certainly helped Nick make the decision to choose the community college that was in his own backyard, it was important to him to be able to foster a tight relationship with his professors.

"Ultimately, I decided to attend a Nashua Community College (NCC) because I wanted to be in smaller classes and be able to have the opportunity to get to know my professors

"I would tell anyone considering attending college that if you're coming from a smaller high school and don't want a massive culture shock, going to a community college like NCC is the perfect way to get a good education in a variety of fields without having to spend a ton of money while doing it."

Nick plans to continue to help adults and youth discover their passions and gain confidence through a martial arts approach to wellness and self-discipline.

LIFE-OP is a post-secondary education and vocational program of the Nashua Center for Students with Developmental Disabilities

Have you met the LIFE-OP team in room 105? Students in the program work and volunteer on campus, take classes, and participate in campus life to foster communication and social skills.

About LIFE-OP

"It started with one student, now we have 15," said Nora Driscoll for her," Nora said, listing tasks such as helping a student navigate an apartment with things like budgeting, cleaning, and we helped her find a job as a cashier for the last four years," she said. "Ultimately, we find them independent - that's the goal."

The student who started it all came from Nashua, and would love to stay. The student's diagnosis was autism, and routine was important to her. When her services hits 21, they age out of their home school district and have to find a new place to live.

Nashua Center leadership brought a proposal to President Lucille Gaudin for space on campus. "It was wonderful, and we owe it all to President Gaudin," Nora said.

Joining a college campus was a meaningful move for LIFE-OP participants. They get their ID and be just like their siblings and cousins - It's a milestone.

Pat recently picked up a new lunchbox made of a blank white fabric, and remembered that LIFE-OP included avid artists, "I had an idea that Kristen might want to draw on it, and it came back looking beautiful!" Kristen covered the lunchbox with colorful artwork, including several portraits of Pat, who the students call "Mr. G."

"We don't interact with LIFE-OP enough, more people need to get involved," Pat said. "They make my day - and they changed my perspective on people with intellectual disabilities."

Nora said they would welcome anyone else with a light-colored lunchbox who wanted a personal touch. But the team can also help with other tasks - whether volunteer or paid. For instance, the group recently organized Pat's bookshelves in his office.

"We would do anything. We do recycling with Richard and Rick, they're a great pair," said Nora, adding the group redeems cans to raise funds for activities, and everyone is welcome to drop aluminum cans off in Room 105, "We collect \$4, and that's a bowling trip for someone."

The group represents a wide range of abilities, but Nora said a usual favorite is completing errands. Anyone interested in connecting with LIFE-OP for volunteering or vocational tasks can contact Nora at nriscoll@nashuacenter.org, 603.883.8205 x57, or stop by room 105.

Also, if anyone is looking to make a new friend at lunch, they are welcome to sit down with the LIFE-OP team in the cafeteria.