



Giving adults with autism the skills to build independent lives

August 9, 2016 at 6:35 PM EDT

Before Josh, 36, arrived at First Place Transition Academy, he had never taken public transportation on his own, much less held down a paying job. But a new pilot program is empowering adults with autism to overcome hurdles to independence. Special correspondent John Donovan, co-author with Caren Zucker of “In a Different Key: The Story of Autism,” reports from Phoenix.

JUDY WOODRUFF: Tonight, we begin an occasional series about people living with autism and other spectrum disorders, A Place in the World.

While reporting the history of autism for their book, “In a Different Key: The Story of Autism,” co-authors John Donovan and Caren Zucker found a program in Phoenix, Arizona, that expands options for people living with autism.

This is the first of two reports.

JOHN DONVAN, Co-Author, “In a Different Key: The Story of Autism”: Why is it a big deal that Josh Kluger gets up every morning and makes his own breakfast and straightens up the place a little, and then remembers, belatedly to go back and grab his lunch before he heads off to work, which takes a quarter-mile hike, texting all the way, before he reaches the bus stop, and then a 45-minute trip with one transfer along the way?

And when I comes on board and Josh shows me how to swipe my ticket, why is that a big deal? Because, until last year, Josh had experienced none of this. No apartment. No paying job. No bus pass even. Actually, he’d never ridden a bus on his own before last year.

How old are you now?

JOSH KLUGER, Student, First Place: I’m 36.

JOHN DONVAN: You only really began being able to ride the bus when you were already over 30?