

Mark is a very well recognized member of our Greeley Colorado community. Mark frequents many places, navigating neighborhoods with his motorized wheelchair while sporting his favorite Denver Broncos regalia. So, it wasn't a wonder when Mark learned about The Arc of Weld County's tech coaching, that he was all in. However, it was what he self-disclosed at the start of the coaching that came as a surprise. Mark, in all of his 62 gloriously fulfilling years of life, had never touch a computer!

Needless to say, Mark came to the coaching opportunity with no prior experience. He participated in The Arc of Weld County's Code Ninjas music coding 4-week class. The Code Ninjas tech coaching allowed participants to use laptop and tablet devices to learn coding skills through primarily visual icons, colors and shapes. Mark flourished with the tablet option, as it allowed him to maximize his mobility and the use of his fine motor skills. At the start of his coaching, Mark required frequent hand-over-hand supports with consistent verbal prompts to use "light touch" with the touchscreen. Throughout the 4-week group sessions, Mark was introduced to and practiced tapping, dragging and dropping programming sequences in the Scratch coding platform. Using these skills, by the third and fourth session, Mark was able to independently compile a sequenced pattern of colors and images to create full songs, including "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Recently, Mark was approved to receive his very own device through The Arc of Weld County's Inclusive Technology Access Fund. To maximize his independence, the fund will provide a large screen tablet, while Mark is supported through other program opportunities to ascertain adaptive equipment to secure the tablet to his wheelchair for use while in the community. As mentioned, Mark is a man about the town and upon receipt of his new tablet, he is excited to learn how to use Google Maps, specifically the walking function, to better navigate the city. As Mark so succinctly stated, "It is amazing what you can do with technology."

As The Arc of Weld County continues to develop and expand tech coaching opportunities throughout the remainder of this year and beyond, one thing is for sure, Mark will be there and living his best life. He has also encouraged Karen, his wife of many years, to get involved and learn more about computers. Together they will traverse the landscape of new technology and demonstrate just how that technology can support community inclusion!