

YouTube is a way for some video creators to share life with disabilities

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Amythest Schaber has 100,000 subscribers on YouTube. She began her channel, Neuro Wonderful Ask an Autistic, out of a desire for autism to be perceived as something different from what she was seeing. Photo by: Amethyst Schaber

Ruby Ardolf is 14 years old. She has her own YouTube channel. She does videos about normal teenage life.

Yet Ruby stands out from other teens. Ruby has Stromme syndrome. This condition results in microcephaly. The condition reduces the size of her brain. It also reduces sight and movement. Only 12 people in the world have this condition.

Other YouTube channels have stars with different abilities.

Ruby's channel is called Angie and Ruby. Her mother Angie Ardolf co-stars. The channel has more than 100,000 subscribers. It receives millions of views.

Help To Understand Neurodiversity

Angie Ardolf first started a blog about her daughter's condition. Family and friends read it. They could keep up with news about Ruby. What happened went beyond sharing information, though. People could see what Angie was experiencing. They also accepted Ruby. Their YouTube channel came from a similar idea about sharing. Now it's for a larger audience.

"Since I've been posting regularly, our whole family has a better relationship overall because when we get together, they already know stuff that has been going on in her life," Angie Ardolf said. Ruby cannot always start these conversations. "Same at school. The girls in school they know what's going on. They can say, 'Hey I heard you went to the movies this weekend.'"

Others with different abilities say social media has many benefits. They connect with others. Some people they meet have similar conditions. They share information. Some make money off the videos they make.

Many think their efforts help others. They help people better understand neurodiversity. Neurodiversity is the idea that developmental differences are not disorders to be treated. They are differences to be respected.

Teaching Tools

Amythest Schaber is 28 years old. She helps others learn about autism on YouTube.

People with autism have different abilities. Some can talk, while others can't. Many of them are uncomfortable with noise. Some have trouble looking other people in the eye. Some are extremely skilled at art or music.

Like Ruby and Angie Ardolf, Schaber has 100,000 subscribers. Schaber's channel is called Neuro Wonderful Ask an Autistic. She wanted people to look at autism in a different way. Schaber wanted them to see more than just problems. Schaber believes there is an upside. She wants to tell others about it.

Social media could help change what is popular on the web. Social media could be used as a teaching tool. Doing so would make room for new purposes and experiences. People might better understand how others see the world.

Missions To Accept

Ruby's mom Angie agrees.

"Hearing people say that they accept her differences — Ruby is awesome. Ruby is beautiful. Ruby is funny. That has always been my mission," she said.