

**STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:  
PEACH CHINRATANALAB**

*This interview first appeared in the June National Coordinating Center Newsletter.*

**What is your name, where are you from, and what college did you attend?**

My name is Pisanach Chinratanalab. People call me Peach. I was born in Tennessee, and my family is from Thailand. I graduated from Next Steps at Vanderbilt University on May 2, 2021.

**What classes were your favorite?**

I would say Transition to Adulthood was my favorite class. I've always wanted to be around kids with disabilities, like I have been working with Best Buddies since high school. That helped me get internships at places like the Susan Gray School at Vanderbilt - Kennedy Center.

**What would you say the best part of college was?**

I got to attend in-person events, I was involved with different clubs, I loved going to student-led organization concerts (music is my favorite thing in the world) and going to football games (even though I don't like sports). Also, I learned how to be an advocate for myself in college.

**What was the best advice you got while you were in college?**

"Have fun while you're at it, cause this moment is not going to last forever." Also, "speak up for yourself."

**Can you share anything about how COVID effected your college experience or your life, in general?**

In terms of work, I was put on hold until now. All the classes were online, [even] People First and Best Buddies events were all online. It was hard to stay focused because the phone kept ringing, and everyone talks all at once and the teacher was trying to say something, and you can't get anything done. But I liked that I could hang out with my family, even more than I did before COVID.

**What do you hope to do after college?**

I've had a lot of paid and unpaid work experiences but now I work at Bubble Love Nashville (a bubble tea shop inside the Nashville Farmers' Market) where I do customer service and marketing, so I help customers and I do marketing to teach people about bubble tea. I will keep doing volunteer work with The Arc of Tennessee, DIDD, Disability Rights Tennessee, AUCD, Best Buddies, and Davidson County Chapter of People First (as Vice-President).

Actually, I am the co-chair of The Arc of Tennessee Transportation Committee, which I started. We deal with the issues that most



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—Peach

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people face is “how can I get to work? How can I get to school? Is there a bus that’s wheelchair accessible? Is my car accessible?” I work with Dylan and we do research on different modes of transportation and transportation companies, we contact them, and review steps to make sure transportation is accessible to people with different abilities.

### **Finally, can you tell us something about yourself unrelated to school or work?**

Growing up in my family, my favorite foods are Chinese and Thai. There’s also a Southern influence and I put my own American twist on things. I love learning new things about cooking from different cultures.



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#### **Next Steps website:**

<https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/departments/nextsteps/>

#### **Watch the I’m Thinking College (Even with my Disability) video created by Next Steps:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMPv6p4YifU&t=2s>



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