

## Helen's Story

Helen was looking for something fun for her son, Tony, to do after school, particularly if he could engage with others. When she saw the "Make, Invent, and Code" virtual class offered by the Howe Library, she signed him up. She was sure he would like it.

For his part, Tony wasn't. For one thing, he had had a negative experience in another after-school program before the pandemic. For another, he was 10 years old and didn't like being told what to do.

To make matters worse, the first class didn't go well. Tony got home from school just as the class was beginning. When he logged on, it was already in session, so he felt as if he were behind from the start. He watched that entire first class from just "off-camera" so that no one else could see him. Not an ideal beginning!

Happily, Tony decided to give the class a second chance, and things changed. Rachel Donegan, the course instructor, had prepared well to engage different interests, and it paid off. Her topics included designing 3-D objects, writing program code to make symmetrical shapes, and laser cutting Valentine gifts. Tony bought in.

His earlier experience had led Tony to question his own talents; the older kids in that class made him reluctant to try things. This time felt different. Rachel was patient, and the other students were supportive. When Rachel gave him options, Tony's creativity was inspired. As he participated and presented his work, his self-confidence in his technical skills and public speaking grew. At the end of each class, he looked forward to the next.

Helen was delighted with how Tony flourished in this program. Signing him up had proven more than just knowing what he liked. He had loved it!