

My name is Zachary Cota, I am a 23-year-old Social Work student in Portland Oregon. I was raised in Bend from middle school through high school, I graduated in 2012 from Bend Senior High School. I had specific plans for myself after graduation, and when those plans for myself did not happen, I became a little lost. Without any back up plans in place, I went through a tough couple of years. Long story short, I ended up being homeless, broke and had no sense of direction. Eventually, I was connected to a case manager and my life started to improve. He taught me how to utilize community resources, so that I was able to transition towards independence. Once I had the right resources under me I was able to work my way to Portland to start my college career.

After getting grounded and ready to pursue my academic career, I was able to take a time out and reflect on my past. It took a lot of hard work and growing in order to be where I am today. I had to learn how to utilize the resources in Bend for my advantage. There was one point where I needed Health Insurance, and I had no idea how I was supposed to get it. After learning the steps on how to do it from my case manager, I stepped out of the door and was prepared to go acquire it myself. I thought to myself what if I could help teach young adults the way to go about getting something like health insurance. I then came up with an Idea called “manila project”. When I was In High School I was not taught how to properly utilize resources in my community that would help me become independent. When it is time to file taxes, gym class is not going to be very helpful. Manila Projects goal is to equip students with the necessary resources and strategies on how they would be able to file their taxes on their own. We cover everything from how to get to work via bus, to finding an emergency shelter for the night.

“Manilla Project”. I believe that this project has the potential to help young adults like myself who may be in the same predicament that I was once in. Currently, the Manilla Project is in the testing stage in the form of a website that can also be accessed on mobile devices. I am seeking a couple community partners in Bend who work with youth that are willing to test this with me!

<https://zacharycota.wixsite.com/manilaproject541>