**Selected Coding Stories (Derek Bal)**

**-- An experience problem-solving:**

-- In building out my most recent project, the U.S. Repository App, there came a point where I realized the importance of planning ahead. Initially I was approaching this app by creating different functions to handle different kinds of data. But as time went on, this began to complicate things, I felt I was always coding in a dark tunnel, confused on the best approach. Since this was the most burdensome part of the project, I did my best attempt at creating a function to handle all the data types I would be using in my app (sections, links, and text), and it would go through a series of checks to process that information and always end with the output of showing links or showing text. After successfully scaffolding that function, I felt relief. I was out of that dark tunnel, and while other complications surfaced, they all felt more manageable since I could always rely on the function to return the appropriate information.

**-- An experience building out a project:**

-- A really good friend of mine is a case worker. She knew I was learning coding and approached me with an idea to compile all the low-income resources she found reliable and important to be in one app. I took on the challenge. It seemed cumbersome at first because I hadn’t quite had a grasp on CSS yet. If I did not have a decent looking site to start, I don’t feel quite as encouraged. So I went and I found some YouTube tutorials to strengthen that foundation. Kevin Powell’s channel helped a lot. Now I had the knowledge to make a serviceable looking app. So I went ahead and looked at the information she gave me, and realized it would be good to host a database storing this info somewhere. I researched and found SQL to be the way. So I started going to work on how I would store this information in a table, and when I had it I populated a MySQL database with that info. There were some changes that had to be made to the initial info to make it more accessible and generalized to public. So I had to do research and find these things. I also learned how to utilize that info to connect it to working actions in the HTML side, like being able to email or call someone immediately or viewing the map of the location or the website. It was rewarding figuring it all out and after deploying both parts of my site, the front and back ends -- I was told by my friend that she shared the website with some of her coworkers and clients, so that made me happy, and one person had sounded excited about it, which made me even happier. Now, I try to think of website ideas that would be very useful to people, returning useful information or increasing education.