**Interview with Sarah**

**Friday May 19th, 2017, 5pm**

**Shady Brook Park, Meadville**

Sophie: How old are you?

Sarah: 18.

Sophie: So are you a senior in high school then?

Sarah: Yes.

Sophie: At which high school?

Sarah: I used to go to Meadville but now it’s PA Cyber.

Sophie: Oh okay, cool. So it’s all online?

Sarah: Yes.

Sophie: Cool, well that will be exciting because I’m talking to you about like media and technology so that’s really cool that you do school through technology. So could you just tell me a little bit about yourself? Like who are you? Describe who you are.

Sarah: Um.. I don’t actually do that much (laughs) so it’s hard to say something like I just moved out so everything I do is really just at home. Like I organize like crazy and plan everything over and over again until it actually happens so that’s my whole life (laughs). Which actually, I do most of that online too.

Sophie: Really? How so? What do you mean?

Sarah: I plan everything, like I’ll save it in tabs and then I’ll like have to organize everything and it has to be on paper, it has to be on my phone, and everything. It all has to be connected, it’s weird.

Sophie: No I think that’s cool so is that like emails or school work..?

Sarah: Yeah. Everything is online.

Sophie: So you said you just moved out, so you moved out of your family’s home into your own place?

Sarah: Yes.

Sophie: So where is your new place?

Sarah: It’s on Poplar, it’s right by McDonald’s.

Sophie: Okay cool, how do you like that?

Sarah: I like it a lot so far, though it’s weird because I’m used to all that noise (pointing to her family in the background) and it’s so quiet.

Sophie: Are you living alone then?

Sarah: With Dylan, he’s over there too.

Sophie: Okay cool. So when did you move out?

Sarah: Last month.

Sophie: Wow so it’s really new. And you like being on your own and independent?

Sarah: Mhmm.

Sophie: So where did you live before, like with your family?

Sarah: Yes.

Sophie: In Meadville?

Sarah: Yes, by Neason Hill Elementary School.

Sophie: Okay, so how do you like Meadville?

Sarah: I didn’t always live here, I moved here four or five years ago, and it’s a lot different.

Sophie: Where did you move from?

Sarah: Pittsburgh, so I’m used to a lot of really big cities and then Meadville is very calm and quiet and it’s kinda funny when people say “the city of Meadville” (laughs) because to me this isn’t as big of a city as I’d picture but I really like it here, and I think I’d stay here, I wouldn’t go back to a bigger city.

Sophie: Really? So your plan right now is just to stay here long term?

Sarah: Mhmm.

Sophie: I actually moved from a big city that I grew up in too so I feel that! I feel you! (laughs) So what do you feel about being a young person in Meadville specifically? How’s your experience here?

Sarah: Um.. it’s kinda different because there’s generally two groups of young people in Meadville, there’s the ones who are still kind of immature and they can make Meadville generally look not as safe or as a calmer peaceful environment to be around and then there’s the ones who are more mature and responsible and it’s more like the adults in Meadville. So coming from… that’s why I switched to Cyber, there are things about Meadville that could change that way.

Sophie: What do you mean “that way”?

Sarah: Like if there was more so somewhere where people could go to be loud or you know, themselves, without being almost obnoxious around the downtown that would help a lot, because.. I’m not really sure how to word that, but some people don’t like going downtown only because people can be a little obnoxious.

Sophie: Yeah, there really isn’t, well at least my sense is that there aren’t a lot of spaces for young people to hang out.

Sarah: No, there’s nowhere for them to go (laughs)

Sophie: So they’re just kind of stuck being places and then they’re labelled a nuisance

Sarah: Yes, especially when there’s not anything else to do, so that’s mainly what is left.

Sophie: Yeah. So where do you and your friends hang out the most usually?

Sarah: We’ll go to places like the new coffee shop, we go there a lot, or places like the Downtown Mall or “@the bank,” just places like that where you can just go and walk around. There’s not much else here (laughs).

Sophie: There’s not much, but there’s like bowling..? Do you ever do that? Mini golf..? Movies?

Sarah: No. Also most of those places you have to be able to drive to. And there’s a lot of kids in Meadville who have to walk places and there isn’t anything else here.

Sophie: That’s a really good point. So when you like hang out at those places, what are some things that you typically do?

Sarah: Umm.. sit and talk, half the time we might just be scrolling through our phones, you know? (laughs) Scrolling through our phones or buying things you didn’t actually want to buy, that’s it.. (laughs)

Sophie: That always happens to me (laughs). So when you’re like hanging out and you said scrolling through your phones, are you usually doing that together? Or are you each like doing your own thing on your phones?

Sarah: Our own thing on our phones, yes (laughs) social media.

Sophie: So like how would you say media plays a role in your friendships or relationships in general?

Sarah: I know before I moved out I wasn’t generally allowed to hang out with my friends as much and so it was mostly communication to keep in touch with everybody, we would talk 24/7 like if we weren’t on the phone messaging each other we were in the shower or we were asleep (laughs) so that plays a big part in it because I wouldn’t have the friend I have right now if I weren’t able to communicate with them, especially since most of my friends aren’t actually from Meadville, they’re from another town, so I wouldn’t know of any of the people I do now if it weren’t for social media.

(7:10)

Sophie: So you mentioned that most of your friends are from another town, where is that?

Sarah: Mainly just places like Saegertown or Pittsburgh where I’m from

Sophie: Gotcha. So you mentioned that when you were back at home, you didn’t get to hang out with your friends as much, did your parents have rules about technology and things like that since you texted all the time? Did they ever limit it?

Sarah: Not for me, because I was 16 and 17 so it didn’t matter much for me, but there is a limit for the younger kids, it’s mainly just bedtime, 8 o'clock, they have to turn everything in. So if that were me I’d be upset (laughs) but it’s not me.

Sophie: So they let you be on technology, they’re not too strict on that?

Sarah: Yes.

Sophie: Okay so let's go back to how you use technology in a typical day. So maybe you could run me through like a typical day of yours and each of the times when you use technology, whether for like school or entertainment, things like that.

Sarah: Okay so all of my alarms, so like the very first second of my day is with technology (laughs) because all of my alarms are on my phone and everything is set so if I don’t have those I’m not doing anything (laughs) so I have that, and then I have to check through all of my calendars and everything which is also on my device. Then I have to go on my laptop since my school is online, everything is on there, it’s all of my classes, I see all of my teachers through the screen, all of my assignments are saved there, we do everything, all of the textbooks and everything, they’re all digital and online. That’s most of my day also online, all media. And then after that it would be just back to my phone, social media,all on my phone, all day and my calendars, everything, all on there (laughs) that’s my whole day.

Sophie: So you’re connected all day long.

Sarah: All day long.

Sophie: And do you text people throughout the day and keep in contact with them? Like your friends, maybe your family?

Sarah: Yes, so it’s more than one device at the same time (laughs) because I have all my school and everything online, textbooks and everything.

Sophie: So do you think you use it more for a certain thing like school or entertainment or it’s just a balance of both?

Sarah: More so a balance of both.

Sophie: Okay, and do you work at all? Or you’re just a student right now?

Sarah: I do work.

Sophie: Where do you work?

Sarah: McDonald’s, because it’s right by my house.

Sophie: Do you use technology at all in your work?

Sarah: Well a lot of the job is technology, there’s the headsets, like we have to take orders through the technology, we have to ring up everything on the register through the technology, everything everybody orders get sent to screens and we have to clear them all of from there. Everything you need to make the food or get the drinks or anything it all runs on the technology that we have over there. So if we didn’t have that...

Sophie: Like if the power went out you wouldn’t be able to serve people?

Sarah: We’d have to close down. That happened! You can’t do anything.

Sophie: Wow. So you’re very reliant on technology.

Sarah: Yes (laughs). And then I’m also a crew trainer so to train all of the new crew members you need the laptops and all of programs and all of the videos you use to train everybody so you can’t do anything at all in the whole store without the technology.

Sophie: Wow. So what types of technology do you use specifically like you have your own phone, your own laptop, do you have any other technological devices you use a lot?

Sarah: Umm.. not that I use a lot. We do have the gaming system, like a smart TV. So everything we want to do for entertainment wise, it has to go through online and be sent to the TV and we have all of that.. (laughs)

Sophie: I’ve never really seen one of those smart TVs.

Sarah: It’s mainly just, it’s not one of the crazy ones that do a lot of things, but just if I want to watch something it's on my phone so I cast it from my phone screen up to the other screen.

Sophie: Okay so you could watch like Netflix..

Sarah: On a bigger screen, so (laughs) now that I think about it, if I lived without it I don’t know what I would do because everything I do, I realize now, depends on technology, all day.

Sophie: (laughs) I hope this isn’t like a scary realization. So let’s talk about like the things you do with technology. So what do you do online, like what sites do you go to? If you feel comfortable sharing that..

Sarah: Umm.. I know for my school, I have the school website that I have to go to.. almost all day (laughs). Just social media sites, like I’ll be on facebook and facebook messenger a lot just to talk to people. Umm..

Sophie: Do you talk to people on facebook, like things like that, while you’re doing school? Like at the same time?

Sarah: Yes (laughs) all at the same time. Umm I know I use the Meadville calendar a lot, like on the website just to know what’s going on in Meadville because generally whenever there’s events going on it is places we can get to and people in the town can get to without having to drive somewhere further away, it’s like the Diamond, and places like that. So I’m on that site a lot. That’s really all I can think of (laughs).

(13:20)

Sophie: So you really use the internet as a tool, it sounds like, to find things to do.. So what about social media, you said you use Facebook, are there any other social media that you’re on?

Sarah: Um… no.

Sophie: Twitter, instagram, snapchat, any of those..?

Sarah: I don’t use any of those (laughs), it’s mainly just to contact people. I’m not sure, I guess I could just text on my phone but I guess that’s not good enough (laughs) because I use that to contact everybody.

Sophie: Facebook messenger?

Sarah: Mhmm yeah.

Sophie: So most of what you do on social media is just like talking?

Sarah: Yes.

Sophie: Okay. So do you do any other kinds of media, like music, art, film? Are there any of those that you’re in to?

Sarah: Music.

Sophie: Do you make music or just listen to music?

Sarah: Just listen.

Sophie: Okay.

Sarah: All the time, all day (laughs) so I guess that’s another one!

Sophie: What kind of music do you like?

Sarah: ...a lot of everything (laughs) I don’t listen to country very much, I think I listen to everything except country (laughs)

Sophie: Okay, that’s basically me too so I get that (laughs). Do you listen to any local bands too? Or go see live shows at all?

Sarah: I usually didn’t until my sister is in the “Teens Around Town” group and she runs those Saturday winter events that we had above the Market House.

Sophie: Okay, I don’t know about that, what is it?

Sarah: “Teens Around Town,” it’s a group for just kids around town to get involved, and do things, and one thing they did was there was this thing, above the Market House, the arts.. I don’t remember what it’s called but that space, every Saturday it would be open for any kids or adults, anybody around town could come up there and listen to music and there would be drinks and snacks, and you didn’t have to pay, it was a suggested donation to keep the program running. They’d have people come every day, I know there was a theatre group, who came and performed one day, there was a local band that came and played, I can’t remember the name of it for the life of me (laughs) but I know that group got me involved in a lot of things locally like the theater groups and bands that play.

Sophie: That’s so cool, I didn’t even know about that! So is it still happening?

Sarah: That’s just for winter, there’s supposed to be something that starts up soon that’s not just in there that’s just when it’s cold it’s inside. There’s supposed to be something that’s going on, where it will be outside but it’s still the same thing.

Sophie: Okay cool. If you hear of one of those happening in the next few weeks would you let me know?

Sarah: Mhmm.

Sophie: That would be awesome to go to.

Sarah: Also Katie, my sister, she helps run it, she’s in that group and Lee, every single time their group is involved, Lee is the one who runs it. So he’ll know all about it.

Sophie: Oh cool, so he’ll know, and I get it through him. So is there anything else in Meadville, like any other media scenes that you look at, like art, photography, film.. Do you have friends who make any of those things?

Sarah: I have a friend who goes to the Vo Tech right over there and she does art, so I know she would be involved in a lot of the things around town like I know there’s art shows, especially above the market house, there’s art shows all the time. That whole center have things around town all the time to show their art, galleries, um.. So not me personally but I do have friends.

Sophie: So do you think that there is a lot of chances for people in Meadville to make different media of their own?

Sarah: Yes. Because even if they are not in a program that you’d have to pay for or go to school through, there are programs that run all the time, photography classes, art classes.. So many different things in Meadville you can go to if you just know about them and a lot of them are at the market house.

Sophie: So let’s talk about technology a bit and how you think about it. What do you think are the benefits and the drawbacks of using technology?

(18:21)

Sarah: Well the benefits obviously would be everything I use it for (laughs) just to keep in contact with everybody who you can’t really see as often, or for me its school, I get my education online. I keep track of everything, the calendars, everything.. It just, you can run your life based on the technology. But the downsides I guess would be because there’s so many things you can do, technology wise, people spend their whole life on technology or they get distracted.. videos, scrolling through social media, you can be on there for hours and not do anything else or even get out of your house.. So there’s things like that that can be a drawback because it might take over your time.

Sophie: Do you think it keeps you from connecting with other people or do you think it actually helps you?

Sarah: Not me personally, I think it helps me.

Sophie: It sounds like it. This is a random question but I just remembered that I wanted to ask you, why did you choose to switch to online school?

Sarah: Um.. the Meadville high school did not offer a couple classes that I wanted to take that the online school was able to because being that it’s a school all throughout Pennsylvania, the teachers can be located anywhere in PA so they can have so many different types of teachers and it was specifically a Biochemistry class I wanted to participate in that Meadville didn’t have, so I switched to Cyber. Also, just because of things like work, I can go to work a lot more if I’m able to do my school whenever I want online. So it was just mainly the timing of regular school, where I couldn’t work as much or do many other things.

Sophie: How did you find out about online school?

Sarah: I have a couple friends who go to that school and that’s another way like if I wasn’t able to communicate with these people I wouldn’t be able to talk to them anymore and I never would have found out about cyber school.

Sophie: So it was your friends who go there who told you about it?

Sarah: Yes.

Sophie: So biochemistry is that kind of what you want to do in the future?

Sarah: I want to be a science teacher, I’m very interested in Biology and Chemistry, teaching those courses so I thought Biochemistry would be a really nice class.

Sophie: I want to be a teacher too.. but not biochemistry (laughs) So back to technology, how do you feel when you’re interacting with technology? Are there times when you feel happy? Are there times when you feel sad? Frustrated?

Sarah: I think as things are updating so much, especially with the internet things get faster or slower, and people are so used to that now, if you can’t have everything in an instant then it’s frustrating (laughs) but of course there’s time like that, but mainly it’s just happy because there’s so many things through technology that I wouldn’t be able to do otherwise. That’s mainly it.

(little side conversation about a comedy sketch I saw about how people today have no patience for technology)

Sophie: So one more thing, how much of your life do you share on social media? and I guess you said you mostly use Facebook for messaging, but do you post things about your life too?

Sarah: I don’t usually post but I know all social media platforms have the profiles where you write everything about you on there, and I know mine is public, so everybody can see those, anybody who would be able to search my profile, anything that I have on my page, they’re able to see it. So that’s one thing that could be good or bad. I personally don’t have anything on there that it would concern me if anybody knew, so mine is on public. But I guess yeah that could be bad if I did (laughs)

Sophie: I was just thinking about how do you make decisions about what to post but I guess you don’t really post that much..

Sarah: What I would like anybody, if they’re a stranger, if I don’t know them, if I’d be okay with them knowing it I’ll post it, and if not then I won’t. Because anybody’s able to see that.

Sophie: Do you think that becoming knowledgeable about online spaces and like social media is important for becoming successful today?

Sarah: Yes.

Sophie: Can you elaborate? Like how do you define success and how do you think technology comes into that.

Sarah: I think if you have goals and you’re reaching them and whatever you’re doing makes you happy, then you’re successful, no matter what anybody else’s standards are for you as long as you’re happy with where you’re at, then you’re successful. I know for me, if I didn’t have my online school, I wouldn’t be where I am right now because I have work and everything which I was not able to do if I didn’t have my school online through technology. And I know all my plans and everything, even for college, everything that I look at is online and through all of my technology and if I didn’t have access to all of these different resources and things, then I would not ever get where I want to go.

Sophie: So what are, I mean you said you want to be a teacher, what are your hopes and dreams? And what steps do you want to take to get there in the future?

Sarah: I want to be a science teacher, so Biology and Chemistry for high school, right now I have to finish school online, and then I am going to be going to college with a Biochemistry degree and an education minor.

Sophie: Do you know where yet?

Sarah: I want to go to Allegheny, I was actually accepted already but I’m not sure if I’ll actually be going next year or the year after.

Sophie: Oh congratulations! You have to come next year because I’ll be a senior and then I’ll be graduating and I can show you around! I’m an education minor and I was like the president of the Pre-Education Club so I could hook you up (laughs) but regardless, that’s exciting. So how much online school do you have left, is there a graduation date?

(25:41)

Sarah: There is a graduation and it’s in Pittsburgh but I’m not sure if I’m going to get finished in time this year, only because I took extra classes (brother interrupts: gap in speaking) I took extra classes because you’re supposed to take less classes your senior year but I messed up (laughs) because I was like “these are really cool” and I couldn’t decide so I took them all. So I’m not sure if I’m going to get done on time with all of those, which is why I’m not sure if I’m going to school next year or not, I might have to finish the rest of them next year, which would be a pain.. (laughs)

Sophie: Yeah (laughs) Okay so that’s great. I think that’s everything, is there anything else that you want to add?

Sarah: Not that I can think of.