

APRIL 2021



YOUNG  
EXCEPTIONAL  
PERSPECTIVES

## YOUNG EXCEPTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

*A Quarterly Publication Produced BY & FOR NC Youth with Disabilities*

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### ***A Voice Raised with Time - Part 2***

by Billy Pickens, ECAC Youth Outreach Coordinator



Whether you are someone with a disability or not, I am sure we all can agree that for as long as we can remember, we have been constantly asked to define ourselves. From a young age, people ask us about what we want to be when we grow up, how we would best describe ourselves and what our hobbies are. While this is a great way for humans to find common belonging, it also asserts us as diverse and unique in our journey. This is the beauty of individuality and in a world where fitting in seems the most ideal, understanding ourselves is essential in understanding where we belong.

I believe this is especially true for people with disabilities as many of us are born with false labels and ideas about who we are. While some of these can be well-meaning, they can put unnecessary pressure on us to live up to a certain standard or worse, feel we are worth less than we are. In my own experience, people have assumed that my deafblind journey is similar to others in that I have the same beliefs, use the same technology or had the same accommodations in school. However, this could not be further from the truth and it took me being willing to respect my own journey through learning and advocacy for me not just to accept

my individuality but embrace it. I am not Helen Keller or Louis Braille. I am Billy Pickens and nothing gives me more confidence than living an authentic life.

It is my belief that being a self-advocate comes with time but most importantly, it comes with truly knowing yourself as an individual. This is why when I share my story with others, I always remind people that I am just one story in a world of many and if you allow your journey to be authentically your own, you will realize that no one can take control of your narrative better than you. This is the first step in my experience to becoming a more confident person and in the next blog, we will shift gears by discussing the power of connectivity.

**By Billy Pickens**  
*ECAC Youth Outreach Coordinator*

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## **ECAC's Youth Advisory Team Answers the Question: Why is Celebrating Diversity important?**

### **YAT Says:**



#### ***Dallas:***

"I think we should celebrate diversity because it makes people feel proud to be different and unique. We should support everyone for who they are and how they are."

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## ***Kaitlyn:***

"The world would be a better place if we all valued and respected each other's differences."



## ***John:***

"A good thing of celebrating diversity is you get to learn about people. People can be different in many ways. You can learn something from someone, and actually end up learning about yourself. Diversity also increases awareness and appreciation of other cultures and their histories."



## ***Abbey:***

"I think we should celebrate diversity because not everyone is the same. We all are different from each other. We all like different things and no matter what you like, there's nothing wrong to be proud of who you are and who you want to be. For those who don't accept you for who you are, even if they are your family or your friends, then keep going and don't let them get to you because you are strong and amazing."

## ***Nicholas:***



"I think diversity is a good thing because it celebrates everyone's individuality and history because we come from all walks of life and cultures. What's kind of cool is that diversity makes this world incredibly special. We are all different, whether it's your skin color, your family, your ability,

where you grew up or came from, or what your beliefs are. Everyone is special. We need to celebrate this because we can learn from others –their cultures, religions, even their disabilities. Learning about other people will help us understand and respect each other and then we can treat each other better. And that's what we need more of right now."



## ***Lucas:***



"Diversity, on a fundamental level, isn't really about race, gender, or any other factors such as these. These things, on their own, are totally irrelevant. The true importance of diversity is the personalities of the people involved, the ways of thinking. Different people are good at different things, and getting a good mix in terms of

these factors, arbitrary as they are, ensures that you'll have the types of people most capable for each situation."

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## ***Thomas:***



"April is the month of the year where we celebrate diversity. As you know, social media is a pretty judgmental place and will only accept certain people. This makes people to constantly feel bad about themselves. "I'm not good enough." "I'm ugly." "Nobody likes me." "I wish I was cool." That is

not the truth! We are all different, we have different talents and political opinions. We look different, we like different things. Some people even like making EVERYTHING political. One thing for sure, we're all humans who live on planet Earth. If we were all the same, this world would be a pretty boring place. Therefore we are all different so we must learn to love each other and be able to connect with each other. We all make mistakes but that's human nature. We can all get along with each other even if we do have different opinions. Too bad some people are too Republican or too Democrat to love other people."

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## ***Joseph:***



"Diversity is a word that refers to differences and to the variety of everything and everyone. We live in a society where we constantly talk about diversity, honestly, I do not see diversity as something complicated, it seems to me that there should not be so much difficulty with understanding this.

Socially the population is diverse because if diversity refers to being different then we, ALL HUMAN BEINGS

are remarkably diverse, which makes us different. What I do understand is that we are all unique with strengths and weakness and this makes us exceptional because we work hard to show everything, we can do. I think that if we understand that we are different by nature and IT IS GOOD TO BE DIFFERENT, we could understand each other, and have more sympathy and empathy with each other and help each other. Diversity is good because it is like a football team, the players are different and must have different characteristics that fit the position they are playing. Some run faster than others, these others may be heavier because their position is defense, there is a captain to lead, because there always must be a leader. Based and despite the differences, diversity and varied characteristics makes a group. The society in which we live is a group, only bigger and therefore the vision of diversity must be broader, we are all in the great group of diversity in the world and this is a reality. My mother explained all this to me, that some people do not understand diversity. I personally like diversity because you have more different friends, and you do different things, and you never get bored because one good thing about diversity is that you can learn different things every day. "Embrace Diversity and your world will expand" I also learned this from my mom, however, she says she learned it from me, isn't that cool? Well, since we are all different, we are all included in Diversity, and yes, let us celebrate Diversity!"

## *North Carolina's Got Talent*



[CLICK HERE FOR THE  
NCGT ENTRY FORM](#)

YEP's NCGT column is here to put a spotlight on the many talents and abilities of NC Youth & Young Adults with Disabilities ages 5 to 25. The format of submissions can be a poem, artwork, blog, video, song, essay, article, presentation, an "About me" story, a feature for our "Entrepreneur's Corner", you name it!

Selected entries receive a \$25 Visa Gift Card!

## *Check out April's NCGT Winners Below!*

### ***Pediatric Bipolar Disorder Awareness***

by Betsy G

A lot of people have heard of bipolar disorder, but not many people know that it can affect children and adolescents. The



average age of diagnosis is about 25 years old; however studies show that people with bipolar disorder show symptoms in childhood more than 50% of the time.

It can be difficult to diagnose children with bipolar disorder because their symptoms can look similar to other disorders or even just bad behavior. For example, if a young child is having a manic episode you might just think they are throwing a tantrum or being

hyper.

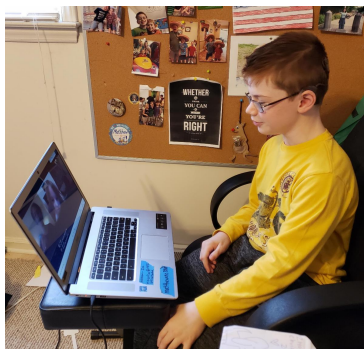
I have had bipolar disorder most of my life but I just got diagnosed with it last year at the age of 9. I had a manic episode and had to go to the hospital. It was very scary and I stayed there for a week. I am much better now that I have proper medication. I do get a little bit manic every once in a while but I haven't had another major episode thanks to medication, therapy and my assistance dog, Hilton.

I hope that sharing my experienced with you will help raise awareness of pediatric bipolar disorder.

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## ***That is Like Me***

by Matthew M



"Hello, my name is **Matthew**, and I am 12 years old. My disability is hearing loss, and my talent is that I created a club at my school for people like me.

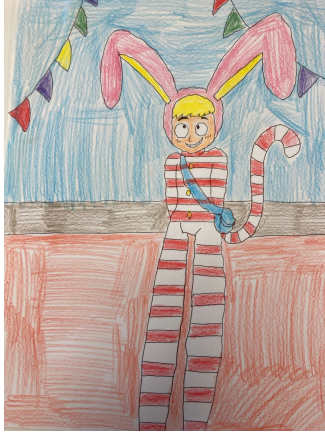
When I was little, I called my hearing aid and implant my super ears, so I decided to call our club "Super Ear Buddies Club," and we try to meet once a month during lunch.

The reason I made this club was that I wanted people that had hearing loss could have space where they could interact with other people with hearing loss while at school.

Sometimes, it is hard to see if people have a disability like, hearing loss; especially if they are in a different grade. Even when they are in the same grade, it could be hard to see their aids if they have long hair making it impossible to see if they have a hearing aid or a cochlear implant. In our meetings, we usually read books like "EL Deafo" where we can relate to the story of a student with hearing loss in the book. After reading chapters, we discuss topics in the chapter and members of the club can say "that is like me".

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**"Poppy the Performer"**

**Serena S.**



**"Cartoon Rabbit"**

Serena, a talented 12th grader with autism at Brevard High School submitted two of her original creations: "Poppy the Performer" (a circus clown) and "Cartoon Rabbit" (black and white). Serena shares "I hope that it will be featured so that everyone sees my designs and smiles."

## APRIL IS MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD



***9 schools. 5 states. Move every 3 years.  
This is my reality as a military child!***

by Kaitlyn B

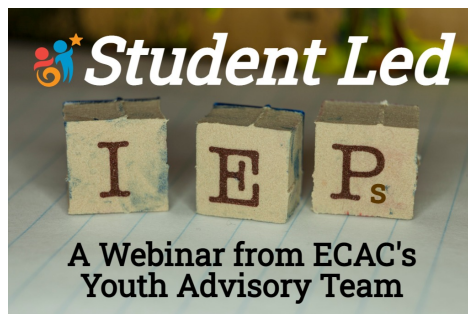
My father is a career submariner in the United States Navy. I was born in Hawaii, while he was stationed there. From there we moved to South Carolina, then to Minnesota, on to Washington state, and we currently live in North Carolina. I found moving so often very difficult. I attended both public and private schools and was able to make friends easily. But, it was always difficult to say goodbye to my friends. However, I am able to continue my friendships with some of the friends I made in the states where we lived through social media.

The upside of all of this is the experience of being able to live in different parts of the country. My favorite place where we lived was Honolulu, Hawaii. One of my cherished memories from there is the malasadas from Leonard's Bakery. A malasada is a Portuguese doughnut without a hole! It is made of small balls of yeast dough, fried, and coated with granulated sugar and sometimes cinnamon. The weather in Hawaii was amazing - always sunny and warm. I also had fun taking the hula lessons in daycare and the abundance of beach time. My least favorite place we lived was Washington state. It seemed like it was cold, cloudy, and rainy every day. On the sunny days we made the most of them by playing outside with the neighbor kids, hiking, and bicycling. While there, we explored the far Northeast area of Washington. We stayed at my dad's military friend's resort in Republic, Washington. There we went fossil hunting. My dad is credited with finding a very rare fossil and is listed, as the finder, along with the fossil in a Washington museum. Presently we live in North Carolina. I am a junior at Currituck County High School. We have been here for three years. My parents promised my sister and I that we would not move again during our high

school years, and we would be able to graduate here.

Throughout my journey I have tried to maintain the motto, "When one door closes, another door opens."

## CHECK THIS OUT!



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH](#)

### *Student Led IEPs*

featuring

ECAC's Youth Advisory Team

Check out this recorded webinar from ECAC's Youth Advisory Team as they explore student-led IEPs and the opportunities they provide to promote self-advocacy, student engagement and youth leadership.

## Views Expressed Disclaimer

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