One of the happiest moments of my life was graduating from college, especially being that I graduated just weeks before the pandemic took hold of our daily lives. However, in a moment of vulnerability, graduating also meant rebuilding my social life in a lot of ways being that many of my friends from college were beginning to embark on their own new chapters. While I knew we would connect again at some point, I also knew that it would not come with the ease that close proximity on campus had to offer and finding new connections can be challenging, especially as a person with a disability. You have to consider many obstacles such as transportation, acceptance, self-confidence and anxiety. I do not make this realization to play victim or ask for sympathy. In fact, during the pandemic, I not only saw this realization as a challenge but as a reason to think outside of the box and use it as a learning experience not just for myself but for the many others reading this who I know may be going through a similar situation.

For this reason, I am embarking on a series over the course of the next few newsletters called Social and Mobile where I will give you some tips that I feel may be able to help you in expanding your social circle making friends that help you enjoy
life to the fullest. While I cannot give you all of the tips in one article, there is one I
would like to highlight from the beginning. Remember that you can do it! I think many
times, especially as people with disabilities, it is easy for us to feel understandably
discouraged or feel that we have nothing to offer to the world around us. In order for
these tips to work, it is important that you find enough confidence in yourself to know
that you are valuable and necessary. Some may not see that in you, but the good
news is that as they say, there is somebody for everybody and I hope that more than
anything, these tips give you as much confidence in that truth as it has given me in
my own social journey.

YEP's "Nothing About Me Without Me" column is intended to recognize youth in their
roles as decision makers. Contributors are invited and encouraged to write about
whatever they decide is important to tell others about.

Repairing Video
Game Consoles
by Johnathan R.
ECAC YAT Member

I started learning how to repair video
game consoles when I was 15, and my
first console I repaired was a Nintendo
64. I repaired a Nintendo 64 because it
had dust inside the console, so I

Check Out My
New Music!
by Thomas G.
ECAC YAT Member

I just released a Christian Ep (extended
play) with singing and rapping. I made
the instrumental for all the songs and
purchased a tool kit from Amazon for $15 and it came with a Phillips-head screwdriver, a tri-wing screwdriver, a security bit screwdriver, a suction cup, cleaning brush and cleaning cloth, a Torx screwdriver, pry openers, and tweezers. I opened the console with a security bit screwdriver, then I used a Phillips-head screwdriver to open the motherboard. Once I opened the motherboard I saw dust, so I used 91% Isopropyl alcohol (which is safe for electronics), and I clean the plastic parts with dish soap and cold water. After I cleaned the motherboard and the plastic parts, reassembled it and tested it out and it worked perfectly! I played Super Mario 64 and I was happy after I repaired it. Consoles that are broken can be repaired, not thrown away. It is very important to learn how to repair video game consoles.

played my trumpet in all the songs. I wanted to be different from the generic Christian music you hear on K Love as that music can get very repetitive. I have combined many types of sounds into the songs. Every song sounds different so I guarantee that there is at least one song that you will enjoy on the Ep. I want my music to reach other people. The Ep is only 22 minutes long and has 8 songs so it won’t take long to listen to the entire thing. All the songs are clean which means it’s not explicit so that anyone can listen and enjoy it. I hope you all like it.

Click To Listen on Spotify
Click To Listen on Apple Music
Click To Listen on SoundCloud
Click To Watch on YouTube

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" article", you name it. ECAC's Youth Advisory Team then reviews the submissions and chooses which ones to feature. Selected entries receive a $25 Visa gift card in the mail!

MEET APRIL's NCGT WINNERS!

Emma Leigh C.
Age 23, Brunswick County

Emma shares: My artwork/coloring provides escape from my anxiety and depression. I spend at least 6-8 hours on each piece.
Logan T.
Age 16, Mecklenburg County

Logan submitted a story he wrote called "The Lion's Adventure."

Click Here to Read "The Lion's Adventure"

Ramiya M.
Age 19, Halifax County

Ramiya shares: I want to send in one of my drawings because I want to be a graphic designer. Drawing also helps me when I am in a bad or sad mood. Drawing brings me to my safe place.
Madison D.
Age 15, Lincoln County

Madison submitted a video of herself singing Amazing Grace and shares:
"I hope this can be a blessing to everybody."

Adele W-G.
Age 20, Durham County
Adele shares: The Tale of Kaspar and the Soup*- a lighthearted English retelling of the German public domain poem "Die Geschichte vom Suppen-Kaspar" by Heinrich Hoffmann. Out of all the poems I've retold, this one is my particular favorite, and I have also received many compliments on it from my close friends. I was even told once that it has "a wonderful combination of humor and tenderness in it".

THE PATH TO ADULTHOOD FACT SHEETS

Transition from high school to adulthood for a student with a disability takes planning that involves many steps and many paths. Click on ECAC's new Path to Adulthood Fact Sheets below to learn more about high school and beyond!
ECAC recognizes the power and value of the voice and ideas of young people. ECAC has launched a Youth Advisory Team (YAT) to help us design projects, programs, and resources that are created for youth, by youth. ECAC will work in partnership with the group to coordinate opportunities and trainings that support the interests and personal development of the YAT members.
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