



## YOUNG EXCEPTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

A Quarterly Publication Produced BY & FOR NC Youth with Disabilities

JANUARY 2022



### Natural Growth Allows Confidence to Flow

Recently, I have been doing my best to keep my early morning routine the same each day. I wake up, meditate, work out and do a quick scroll of social media to see what I had missed the night before. Therefore, New Year's morning started off no differently. While scrolling through funny memes from the night's festivities and individual New Year's resolutions, one recurring theme

throughout the majority of posts I read involved so many people in unique ways expressing how rough last year was and while I agree that we as a collective have had a rough couple of years, I want to propose a slightly different way of viewing our hardships as I enter the final installment of my icon series, natural growth.

As a disclaimer, I am in no way attempting to invalidate the genuine hardships so many have faced, but I hope you can find some peace and comfort in my perspective. As I have mentioned in previous articles, my interest in becoming a self-advocate stemmed greatly from my own life experiences. While I do appreciate all of my life successes, I credit most of my wisdom and knowledge to my challenges from properly expressing my needs to my teachers to finding a way to be understood in a world struggling to understand.

In life, there will always be struggles and while you should accept your emotions without judgment, I encourage you to reflect on those challenges and use them as inspiration and a source for natural growth. I believe that due to my own obstacles, I am now able to help other young people overcome theirs. It may not be easy at first but for me, the hardest part was simply choosing to turn my growing pains into growth. While I cannot say what that would mean for you, I will leave you with one of my favorite sayings. Conquer your

obstacles and never let your obstacles conquer you.

**Billy Pickens,**  
**ECAC Youth Outreach Coordinator**



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 JANUARY's NCGT WINNERS!



### **Super Eyes**

**by Dylan H, Granville County**

They say I can't see well  
How do I know which way to go?  
My eyes hurt and I pretend everything is fine  
But in my mind  
I want to cry  
Do people understand why  
Lord help them to realize that I need help  
Send your angels dear God so I can see depth  
My family yelling when I spill things  
And I don't clean up so well  
I need some guidance  
So I won't be silenced

### **The Cup Song**

**by Bridget P, Buncombe County**

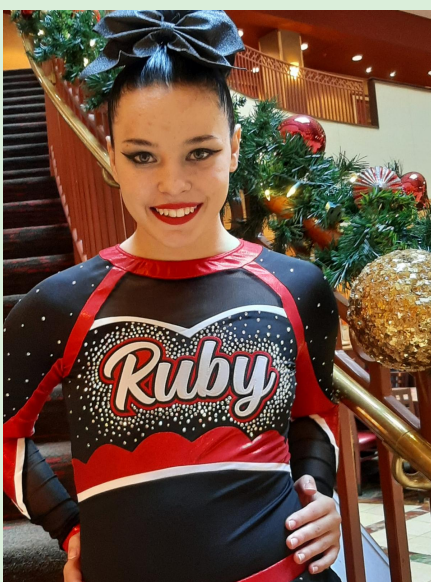
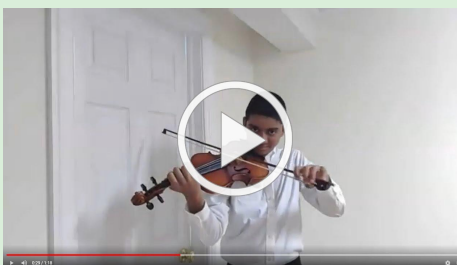
"I sent a video of me singing "The Cup Song" by Anna Kendrick. I should be chosen because I practice singing every day and it brings me a lot of joy. I also like to make others happy."



## Old MacDonald

by Kusal W, Watauga County

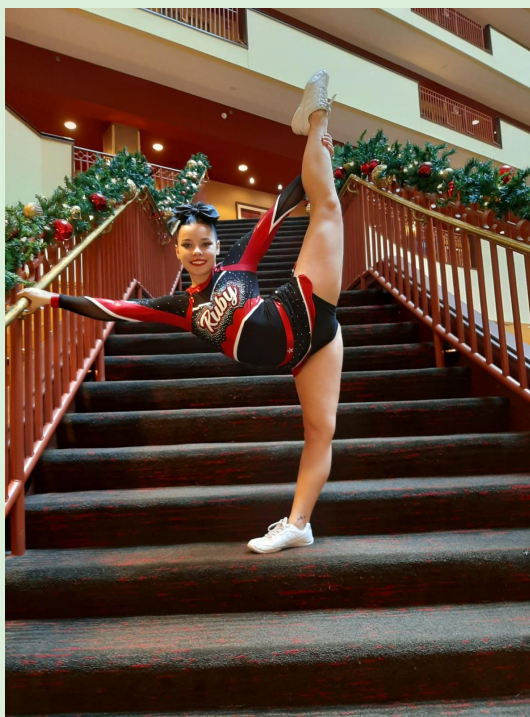
"I am playing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" for this competition and I love to play violin."



## Cheering on Myself

by Lyndzie H, Macon County

"Doing cheer helps me be more confident and helps with my social skills. I love being in the spotlight and showing off my skills to my friends and family."







## Taekwondo Demonstration

by Lee I, Cabarrus County

Lee is a Deputy Black Belt in taekwondo, studying under Grandmaster King at Black Belt USA. He began this journey almost 5 years ago. In this video, Lee is demonstrating several of the various kicks used in this practice.



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## - YAT - Reflections on 2021 & Hopes for 2022



**Members's of ECAC's Youth Advisory Team share about what they accomplished in 2021 and hopes for 2022.**

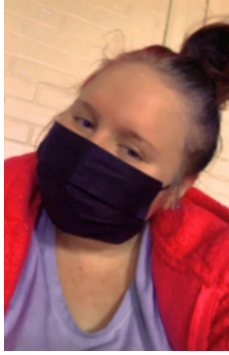
### **Dallas M.**

In 2021 I feel proud that I accomplished my goal of working more. I got to make my own money and help my family at the pet store. I was afraid of snakes before, but I overcame my fear of them and I will hold them now. I also have been helping the customers more and working on my eye contact with them. 2021 was a good year for me. I accomplished a lot of good stuff.



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### **Abbey B.**



2021 has brought a lot of things that were good and bad, but bI have come a long way. I was nominated student of the month for my high school. I was very thankful for becoming student of the month because that's one thing that I have always wanted to be ever since elementary school. I was finally recognized for all the hard work that I have been doing. HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!!!

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## John R.

What I've accomplished in 2021 is that I completed driver's ed class. I took drivers ed because I wanted to learn about the road signs and traffic laws to become a safe driver. Even though I was worried about failing drivers ed, I tried extremely hard on the exam and passed the class with an 89. My goal to accomplish in 2022 is to get my driver's license.



## Mayia W

As we get settled into the New Year, I have been reflecting on the lessons I learned and opportunities received in 2021. Last year I started a podcast, went into full-time advocacy, released music, participated in multiple disability events, and more. But as I look at the opportunities, I see how disability and illness have changed me. Despite all of the things I was blessed to accomplish, I'm most proud of the progress I've made. Living with chronic illnesses is difficult, and last year I was able to acknowledge that. I began to accept it and from authenticity came community. I realized that navigating disability and chronic illness is not an easy task...and doing it alone is a heavy burden no one should have to bear. In 2021, I learned the value of community. Whether it be church community, chronic illness community, or albinism related community, being surrounded by those who share a similar experience, was so needed. As humans, we were designed for connection. My mission for years to come is to continue to serve those I'm called to, but to also continue to take care of myself in light of my health conditions.

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## Nicholas B

The year 2021 was good for me because I got my first ever, paid job! I have worked at Academy Sports + Outdoors in Mooresville since October 2021. I work in the Team Sports Department, where I stock, price items, and help customers. I really enjoy my job and am lucky to have a lot of great coworkers, or as we call them at Academy Sports - teammates!



## Thomas G.

This is what I hope to accomplish in 2022. Throughout my Winter break, I have been working on my first rap EP. It will be a Christian rap EP. I had 3 weeks during the break to get to work on it. As I'm writing this essay, I have



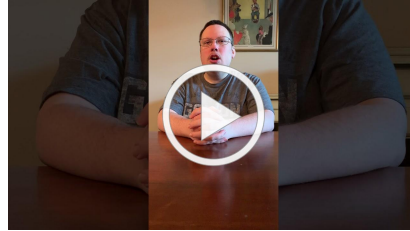


most of it complete and hope to get it finished soon. I plan on having it released this spring. I hope that this EP will receive lots of attention and I hope it will reach and help out lots of other people. On the EP, I talked a lot about praising God as well as my struggles in life. I also talked about how I don't stop despite people thinking bad things about me. I want something that people will be able to relate to. I hope I will be successful in starting a rap career this year.



2022 Winter  
Olympics

**YEP's Hot Topics** section covers current events and/or controversial topics of discussion or things that people have many different opinions about.



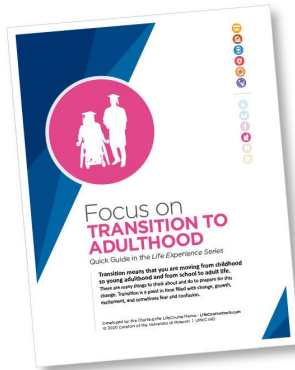
### **YEP's Tools for Your Toolbox**

features tools and resources on Self-Advocacy, Self-Determination and the Transition to Adulthood.

## **Focus on TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD**

***Quick Guide in the Life Experience Series***

Transition means that you are moving



from childhood to young adulthood and from school to adult life. There are many things to think about and do to prepare for this change. Transition is a point in time filled with change, growth, excitement, and sometimes fear and confusion.

**CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD**

**How To Speak Up and Be Heard: Self Advocacy**  
Community of Practice, Northeast Massachusetts 2014

**SELF ADVOCACY IS THE ABILITY TO SPEAK UP FOR YOURSELF AND FOR THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU. AS YOU BECOME OLDER AND TAKE ON MORE RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR LIFE, SELF ADVOCACY HELPS YOU:**

- Get what you need
- Make your own choices
- Learn how to say no
- Express your feelings respectfully

**Places to Use Self Advocacy**

- AT WORK OR SCHOOL:**
  - Adjusting your schedule
  - Participating in meetings
  - Asking for accommodations
  - Requesting tutoring
  - During a job interview
  - Asking for a raise
- AT HOME:**
  - Managing finances (bills/roommates)
  - Requesting personal space/time
  - Renting an apartment
  - Sharing food costs
  - In a relationship
- IN THE COMMUNITY:**
  - Arranging transportation
  - Presenting in court
  - Making a complaint
  - Paying a check
- AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE:**
  - Making an appointment
  - Reviewing a treatment or recovery plan
  - Requesting a second opinion
  - Asking for clarification

**Putting It Into Words**

- AT SCHOOL:** E-mail to professor: "I am asking for a week extension for this assignment. I haven't been feeling well and I fell behind."
- AT WORK:** "I can't work on Sunday. I have a family commitment. Can I work a different shift instead?"
- WITH ROOMMATES:** "I have class at 8 A.M. Can you stop playing your music by 10 P.M.?"
- ARGUMENT WITH A SIGNIFICANT OTHER:** "I need to remove myself from this conversation, could we talk about this later when we are both feeling less angry?"
- AT THE BANK:** "I don't understand this statement, can you explain the fees to me?"
- SPLITTING A CHECK:** "I'd love to go out to dinner. Can we split the check?"
- AT THE DOCTOR:** "Before we make a final decision, I would like to get a second opinion."
- MEDICAL APPOINTMENT:** "The side effects of this medication are bothering me. Can we discuss other options or choices?"

## How To Speak Up and Be Heard: Self Advocacy

Self advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself and for the things that are important to you. As you become older and take on more responsibilities in your life, self advocacy helps you:

**CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD**

**FREE WEBINAR!**

# Health Care Transition Skill Building:

Tools for Students, Families and the IEP Team

**January 19th, 2022 | 12 PM - 1 PM**

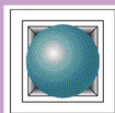
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Learning and trying out life skills is an important step for students as they plan to move into adulthood. For many students with special health care needs and/or disabilities, planning for that transition can include developing skills needed to manage their own healthcare. PEATC and Got Transition have created a health care transition checklist to help students, families, and the IEP team plan for this specific area of transition to adulthood. Join us January 19, 2022, from 12noon-1pm EST to learn more about using the health care transition checklist and to discover what additional resources both PEATC and Got Transition have to offer. Audience Q&A is encouraged. Register today!

**REGISTER:** <https://bit.ly/3oX2PEJ>



partners@peatc.org  
800-869-6782  
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THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE  
TO ADVANCE ADOLESCENT HEALTH



**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT**

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Help a young person with a disability receive a scholarship for achievement to support their future plans.



## The 2022 Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award

**APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED!**

Open to any North Carolina High School Senior with any Type of Disability

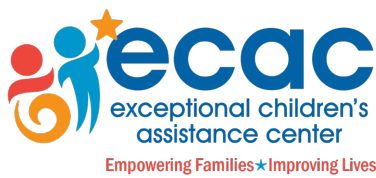
**CLICK HERE to Learn More and Apply**

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