



A Quarterly Publication Produced BY & FOR NC Youth with Disabilities

JULY 2022

The Driving Dilemma

Helpful Tips to Expand Social Circles with a Disability

by Billy Pickens, ECAC Youth Outreach Coordinator



In our last newsletter, I mentioned that I would be beginning a series providing tips to people with disabilities on how to have an enjoyable social life, even during a pandemic. In this article, I mentioned that the biggest key one must have in order to gain a successful social life is confidence within themselves that they can achieve it. However, I recognize that, especially for people with disabilities, simply having confidence is not enough. We are faced with many internal and external roadblocks that

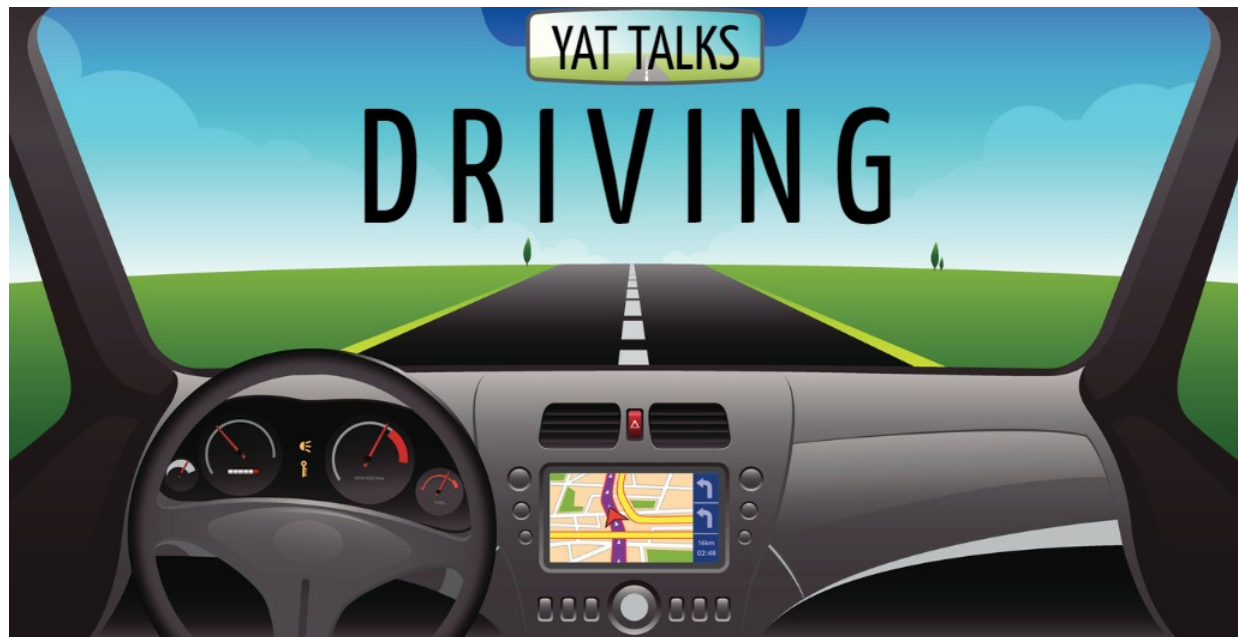
can shake even the most resilient people.

For this reason, I plan to tackle specific challenges people with disabilities face in gaining a social life and one of the biggest challenges without question that many of us can identify with is finding reliable transportation. You will have the opportunity to hear multiple perspectives throughout this newsletter from our Youth Advisory Team on this topic but I wanted to provide a few brief tips based on my own experiences as a totally blind individual who utilizes both public and private transportation.

As people with disabilities, planning ahead when it comes to transportation is a consistent necessity but as I'm sure we all know, life can be spontaneous. It is important to make sure that you have a backup plan, especially if you are going somewhere important such as work. You should also give yourself enough time to execute that backup plan if necessary or generally enough time to be flexible with those providing transportation although being occasionally late happens to us all. Also be aware of all forms of public

and private transportation in your area especially if you live in an area where options are limited. Lastly, advocate for your needs but also be respectful of the time and life circumstances of others! This is especially true when requesting rides from friends or family. Don't take it personally if you are not always a priority!

I know this was simply a quick overview and I am happy to expand on any of these tips in future articles if requested. However, I hope that at the least this article was able to point you in the right direction or better yet drive you in the direction of being social and mobile.



Our Youth Advisory Team is made up of youth who already drive, some that don't, some that can't, and some that won't. We asked them to share their perspectives on driving and here's what they shared.



Transportation Concerns with a Vision Impairment

by Shivansh C.
ECAC YAT Member

Due to a vision impairment, I cannot have a driver license. Growing up, I started to realize that without a license, I cannot do many things by myself. This includes



My Driving Experience

by Johnathan R.
ECAC YAT Member

I took a driver education class last October, and it lasted 2 weeks (from Monday to Friday). I passed the class with an 89 on my written test. After passing the class, I needed to get my vision checked, and I

getting groceries, going to my classes, hanging out with friends outside the classroom, shopping, going on dates, etc. For all of these tasks, you have to depend on someone else, which makes me think sometimes that people who cannot drive have no freedom in terms of traveling by themselves.

Uber may be an option, but we must consider those costs. From my home to school, it takes 7 minutes to drive, but Uber will charge me 11 dollars. So, 22 dollars are spent just for a round trip to school. When I was about to complete high school, it was suggested that I use public transportation. I was ready to try that too, but I also realized the kind of things I would see while traveling on it. Some people were drinking alcohol and using inappropriate language. Overall, it hasn't felt safe for me to use public transportation.

I also asked about assistance with paying for Uber rides to my college, but instead, it was recommended that I complete a special transportation application (which I am filling out right now) that sends a bus with other kids on it to your location and they will drop every single one of us off at our required locations. This will be time consuming, but it will work. However, for my other tasks, I'm left wondering if I really need to spend all my savings with Uber or if I should risk my life with public transportation. In the future, there may be self-driving cars which would not require a driver license, but what about now?

If you are someone who works with an organization that helps visually-impaired students, please consider making this concern a priority. Here are some possible solutions that may work: (1) provide Uber services for free or adjust the prices when there are significant rises in gas prices, (2) assign us a personal driver, (3) consider that one of the reasons we pay taxes is so that people like us can receive the help they need.

learned that because I have myopia (nearsightedness) in both of my eyes, I needed glasses.

In June, two days after Father's Day, I began driving with my instructor. I had to drive for 4 days (from Tuesday to Friday), very early in the morning. I did well when I started driving with my instructor, but I struggled on doing a three point turn, staying in lanes, and steering and controlling the wheel. Although I was upset with my struggles, and I was worried about failing, I began practicing with my dad in the afternoons. It helped improve my driving skills. The next day, my dad and I went to the mall and we drove around the parking lot. He saw me getting better, and he was impressed when I parked between the two lines at the parking lot.

On the last day of class, my instructor and I drove around a school, and I finally did a three point turn. She was impressed and I earned my driving certificate. Even though I was worried, once my dad talked to me and said that my instructor was going to pass me, I was no longer worried about it. I still continue to practice driving with my dad, and I will take my permit test before school starts. Hopefully, I will get my driver's license next year.



The Good and the Bad

by Thomas G.
ECAC YAT Member

My name is Thomas Green and I am 18 years old with autism. I am a driver. I took a driver education class in March 2019 when I was a sophomore at 15 years old, and I got my permit over the following summer break. Exactly 1 year later, I leveled up to level 2 where I gained more driving privileges like being able to drive by myself during the day. In May 2021, I got



Not Right Now

by Lucas J.

ECAC YAT Member

I don't really want to drive that badly. Initially it was because I didn't trust myself to drive, and I didn't trust others to drive when I was driving. That's why I never took a driver education course, and wasn't in a rush to drive when I turned 16. Later it became a matter of not needing to drive. Most of my pursuits are intellectual, and involve using the internet, which does not require me to go anywhere. I will probably learn to drive eventually, but it is not yet a problem for me.



Maybe One Day

by Nicholas B.

ECAC YAT Member

I don't drive right now, but I have taken a class about driving with Ignite that got me interested about driving. I know driving would be good for me and I want to do it in the future, but right now I'm afraid of driving

my full license without any restrictions.

There is good and bad about driving. I like to drive because I can go wherever I want without restrictions. It feels liberating to go wherever I want and it's also fun to drive just in general. I feel free as if I just got baptized at church. It is also fun to blast music as loud as I want. I usually blast rap music with loud bass. I have the windows down and everything. Plus, I usually drive alone so that I can blast music.

However, as with everything, driving is a huge responsibility. You always have to be mindful of everything that's going on around you, you have to concentrate, and you need to be able to think. Also when you approach stop signs, you will need to have a perception of how far away a car is and how fast it is going because if you pull out too soon, you could get in a wreck. Also, a lot of drivers don't know what they are doing so you have to watch out for people who slam on brakes, slow down, switch lanes or if they are doing something they aren't supposed to like pulling out in front of you. You also have to watch out for pedestrians.

While driving is a lot of fun, you have to stay concentrated nonstop. You have a huge responsibility when you drive.



A Work in Progress

by Lizzie D.

ECAC YAT Member

I took a driver education course my sophomore year. I failed the class exam and then had to retake it the next summer and passed. Then, between semesters my junior year, I had to drive six hours over two days and three hours in one day in order to get my permit. Because I have SSI, I am

and it makes me nervous.

now waiting for certain steps to follow through so I can get my license and go for a test drive.



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 JULY's NCGT WINNERS!

Jessa W.

Age 8, Mecklenburg County

Jessa shared her video in hope of inspiring others. Jessa dances at A Chance to Dance at Miss Donna's School of Dance. She wanted to share the reflection of what beauty really is by shifting perspective through dance.



Lyla S.

Age 11, Buncombe County

Lyla submitted her "Under the Sea" watercolor because "I worked very hard on it for 3 weeks and I am very proud of mt hard work and progress."



Joshua B.

Age 22, Randolph County

"This is my guitar performance of the song "Helena" by popular rock band My Chemical Romance. I played both guitar parts and recorded video at the same time. I hope that I become featured because I really want to be able to have fun and encourage other people to achieve

their goals!"



Ashley F.

Age 19, Mecklenburg County

Ashley shares "This is a drawing I did of an eagle. I hope to inspire other artists on the autism spectrum, and win some \$\$\$ for college, ha!"



Jay S.

Age 18, Sampson County

Jay submitted a blog and shares: "I want to be an inspiration to others. I was bullied a lot because of my disability. I want others to read about my experience and see that you are one of a kind. I want people to understand that with the right direction, you



can be anything that you want to be. I want to tell others to follow your dreams and don't let anyone tear you down. "

[Click Here to Read Jay's "About Me" Blog](#)



YOUTH SUMMIT SURVEY

ECAC is thinking about scheduling a one-day Youth Summit for North Carolina youth ages 14 and up. Please take our interest to survey to help with our planning.

CLICK HERE TO TAKE OUR SURVEY!

NOW RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS!



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.

[CLICK HERE FOR YAT APPLICATION](#)

THE EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE PODCAST



YAT Members, Billy Pickens and Mayia Warren have started their own podcast! The Exceptional Experience Podcast serves to empower the voices of youth and young adults with disabilities.

[Check out Episodes 1 through 5 here!](#)

A WEBINAR FOR YOUTH!

YOUR PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

Participating in Your IEP Plan



Being a self-advocate is very important. It allows you to tell people the things that are best for you and the things that may not be good for you. As a student, at least every year, there is a meeting that takes place that is about you. People come together and talk about how you are doing in school, good or bad, and what your goals are for the year. You, the student, are the center of the meeting. You are the focus.

Join us to learn more about self-advocacy and planning for your future alongside other North Carolina youth with disabilities.

Attendees will be entered to win a \$25 Visa Gift Card. 4 winners will be chosen!

This event is for North Carolina youth ages 12 to 22 that have a current IEP (Individualized Education Program)

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!

VIEWS EXPRESSED DISCLAIMER



ECAC is providing this newsletter as a public service. Reference to any specific product or entity does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the ECAC. The views expressed by guest writers, speakers and artists are their own and their appearance in YEP does not imply an endorsement of them or any entity they represent. Views, thoughts and opinions expressed by YEP contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the view of ECAC or any of its staff.



1-800-962-6817

www.ecac-parentcenter.org

ecacyouth@ecacmail.org



The production of this material was funded by the Office of Special Education Programs Grant No. H328M200039. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service or enterprise mentioned is intended or should be inferred.

Exceptional Children's Assistance Center | 907 Barra Row, Suite 103, Davidson, NC 28036

[Unsubscribe \[acombs@ecacmail.org\]\(mailto:acombs@ecacmail.org\)](mailto:acombs@ecacmail.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by bydhamilton@ecacmail.org in collaboration
with



Try email marketing for free today!