

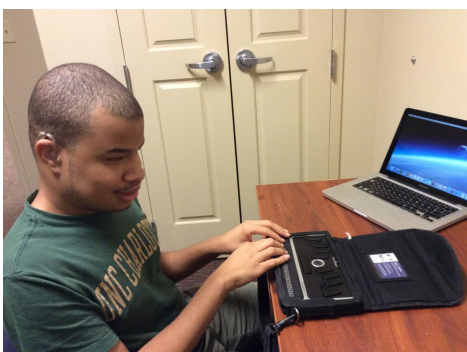


A Quarterly Publication Produced BY & FOR NC Youth with Disabilities

OCTOBER 2022

Social and Mobile Part Two ***Acceptance and Access***

by Billy Pickens, ECAC Youth Outreach Coordinator



From the time we are born, the world around us shapes and molds us. We are taught through our influences everything from how to act, who to hang out with to how to dress and what to eat. One of the reasons I believe we follow these norms without question is trust, knowing that stability in our understanding of the world around us brings security. The second reason, however, and the one I would like to discuss, is the universal desire to be accepted and belong.

As a person with a disability, this longing to feel accepted is no different. In fact, I would argue for some, the pressure is more immense as being told you are not "normal" in some way can lead to a seemingly uphill battle of one seeking their true identity. One of the most hurtful things I have ever heard is that the reason a romantic interest rejected me or I was not invited to a party may have been because I was blind. I have so much to say about this topic that I am going to cover this over the course of two newsletters. However, I want to use this article to offer a few tips to those with disabilities who may struggle with acceptance.

1. Not fitting in everywhere does not mean you fit in nowhere. Too many times we assume that just because the popular crowd seemingly dislikes us, we do not belong. This is not true and there is a place for everyone.

2. Start with your interests and experiences. Find groups of people who see you more for your hobbies or your shared life experiences than your disability. There are so many spaces both on and offline where people with shared interests can connect and see beyond limitations.

3. Remember to accept yourself first!

Lastly, I cannot stress this enough. Learn to feel proud of your authentic journey no matter how others may see it! This does not negate the importance of growth but know that no matter where you are in life, you are worthy of acceptance!



October is Spina Bifida Awareness Month!

by Lizzie D., YAT Member

I was born in 2002 with Spina Bifida. As a child w/Spina bifida, other kids would ask me why I walked the way I walked and asked about "those things" on my legs. I would get uncomfortable with them asking because of how little I understood about my disability. All I would tell them is that they helped me walk (which is partly true) - but the main purpose is to support me when I stand because I have little to no feeling below the ankles mainly - in which case I have to have something or someone to lean on or sit somewhere.

As a young adult, questions and comments no longer bother me as much because I understand more about my disability.

However, when negative comments are made by older kids and adults, I take it more sensitively because of all people, I believe that older kids and especially adults should have some understanding that maybe it's a birth defect.

I recently turned 20 and am starting a journey with the thought in mind that regardless of peoples' opinions of my appearance, that regardless of my limp or "penguin walk" that God sees potential in every aspect! Nothing about me has any less potential than anything else that makes me Lizzie.



My Welding Experience

by Johnathan Richardson, YAT Member

This year, I was accepted into Nash Tech Community College. The course that I am taking is SMAW (Shielded Metal Arc Welding). My reasons for taking the welding class were because I wanted to repair and build with metal parts. My class started late in August. When I first started welding, I was scared that I was going to get hurt from the sparks and the arc light. When my instructor talked to me about my fears, he promised that he is going to keep everyone safe in the shop, and I overcame my fears. After I overcame my fears, I began practicing welding on a piece of metal everyday, and my skills are improving. My class is for the

whole school year, because I have to take an exam at the end of the school year. Once I am finished with my welding class, I plan to learn blacksmithing and woodworking.

North Carolina's Got Talent!



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!

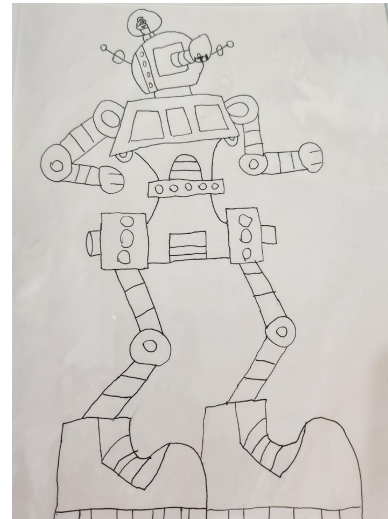
MEET OCTOBER'S NCGT WINNERS!



Dylan A.

Age 6, Mecklenburg County

"Dylan is an amazing artist, from the moment he opens his eyes, he has a plan in mind of all the artwork he will do for the day. He can draw for hours upon hours. He loves to watch movies but more than anything he loves to pause every scene and draw it out. He has an incredible attention to detail and it's beautiful to be able to be a part of his unique world."



Kadin B.

Age 17, Person County

I chose Tyler Ray Holbrook's song "Tie You Down" because I like the song and I want to sing it to my wife one day.





Kaitlyn S.

Age 25, Brunswick County

"What is a True Friend?" is a poem that I wrote. I would love it if my poem is featured in this month's issue of YEP. I think poetry is a great way to express myself. This would be a great honor to me."

[Click Here to Read "What is a True Friend?"](#)

Sean C.

Age 20, Guilford County

Sean is an animator and movie maker. He loves to create videos on his green screen. He loves to write music, create animations and cartoons.



Ty'Rez H.

Age 18, Cleveland County

"This is a drawing of a character I made up. His



name is Sanku. I drew it on my phone through an app called Sketchbook. I would like to share it so people can see him."



OPPORTUNITIES FOR NC YOUTH:

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**

COMING SOON!



JUNIOR YOUTH ADVISORY TEAM

**For NC Youth with Disabilities and/or Special Health Care Needs
Ages 10 to 13**

We are hoping to launch a Junior Youth Advisory Team (JYAT) in January 2023. The team would meet virtually every other Tuesday from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm. The meetings will be facilitated by our current YAT members. Participants will receive a \$25 Visa Gift card for each meeting they attend. The theme in most meetings will be tied to self-advocacy and self-determination. If you are a youth with a disability and/or special health care need between the ages of 10 and 13 and would like to join our JYAT please have your parent or guardian complete the application below.

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY!](#)

**The 2023 Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement
Scholarship Award**

**Open to ANY North Carolina High School Senior
with ANY Type of Disability**

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with ANY type of Disability!**

The 2023 Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award



APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED!

The Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC) is proud to offer the Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award to a North Carolina high school senior with a disability. This award includes a \$1,500 scholarship, to be used for any post high school learning experience/training or for equipment/technology needed for employment.

Applications will only be accepted through **Wednesday, February 1, 2023**. The award will be presented to the winning student during their high school awards ceremony. Based on applications received, additional students may be selected as Runner Up.

**CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS AND TO
APPLY**

APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED!



Pre-ETS STAR Program



*Do you wonder what's next for you after high school?
Are you ready for YOUR post-high school transition?*

The Pre-ETS STAR^{1*} virtual training for students with disabilities is here to help prepare you for a bright future beyond high school. This exciting program provides online employment preparation and training designed to better prepare students with disabilities (ages 16 to 21) to make a successful transition to school, college or technical training after completing high school.



Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC) and Disability:IN North Carolina (DI-NC) are pleased to announce that we will be offering the STAR Program, a Vocational Rehabilitation Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities (ages 16-21) beginning in Fall, 2022. The STAR Program will serve students with disabilities from across the entire state, including students who attend public schools, charter schools and students who are homeschooled.

The STAR Program provides classes for students in:

- Self-Advocacy Skills for Work and Life
- Career Exploration & Skill Alignment
- Work Readiness Training
- Career Mentoring
-

The STAR Program is ideal for:

- Students with Disabilities Ages 16-21
- Students with an IEP or 504 Plan
- Students with limited access to Pre-ETS Services through their school
- Students who enjoy learning online

While open to all students with disabilities ages 16-21 with an IEP or 504 Plan, preference will be

given to students who do not have access to Pre-ETS through their current school. Additionally, STAR will also offer unique opportunities for parents and caregivers to partner with their student(s) in learning and planning for the post-high school transition.

Space is limited and all students will be required to meet the eligibility criteria to be considered for the STAR Program.

For more information contact - starprogram@ecacmail.org

[Click Here to Download the STAR Application](#)

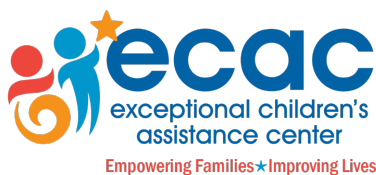
To apply download and save the application form before filling it out and sign the bottom of page 2 and page 4. Email the completed application to:

starprogram@ecacmail.org

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