



YOUNG EXCEPTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

JANUARY, 2021

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A Quarterly Publication Produced BY & FOR NC Youth with Disabilities



Billy Pickens, Youth Outreach Coordinator

A Voice Raised with Time by Billy Pickens

One of the most enjoyable highlights of 2020 for me was watching the Michael

YOUTH ADVISORY TEAM

Who, What & How to Join



ECAC recognizes the power and value of the voice and ideas of young people, especially those with disabilities. We have launched a **Youth Advisory Team (YAT)** to help us design projects, programs, and resources that are created for youth, by youth. ECAC works in partnership with the group to

Jordan documentary, ***The Last Dance***. This series gave a detailed look at Jordan's career with the Chicago Bulls basketball team highlighting experiences that defined him both as a person and as a player. One portion of the documentary I especially found relatable pertained to Jordan's commentary on his participation in social justice initiatives and political movements, his lack of involvement in these being a consistent point of contention from critics.

In the documentary, Jordan explained that because of his constant focus on basketball, he did not view himself as educated enough to discuss these types of issues while also expressing his fear of losing supporters should he become too vocal.

However, Jordan's active role in creating change has since grown and I am reminded of how at one time in my life, I never thought I would be the impactful and vocal self-advocate I am today.

One of the most frequent questions I have received from people, with or without a disability, is "how did you gain so much confidence?" The follow up to this question would be "how can other youth with disabilities gain that same confidence?"

I cannot guarantee you that I will have all of the answers. However, having given this topic some thought over the course of the past few months, I may be able to provide some helpful tips based on my own personal experiences. In the next few newsletters, I am going to lay out four specific areas of life that have made me both a proud and confident advocate.

To better introduce these tips, I have broken them down into an acronym,

coordinate opportunities and trainings that support the interests and personal development of the YAT members.

We are excited that all of ECAC's YAT members have contributed content for **YEP's** January 2021 issue. If you are a youth with a disability, or know one that would like to join our team, please complete the application found below.

YOUTH ADVISORY TEAM APPLICATION

NCGT

Send us your Submissions!



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, **"Entrepreneur's Corner"** feature, you name it. ECAC's Youth Advisory Team will review the submissions and choose which ones to feature in our next newsletter.

**Selected entries will receive a \$25
Visa gift card in the mail!**

**Click Here for NCGT Entry
Form**

"**ICON**" which stands for individuality, connectivity, openness and natural growth.

In the next blog, I will discuss individuality and its importance in one finding true passion in their journey. Whether you are someone with or without a disability, I hope you are able to take something you find valuable away from this series as we embark on this journey together.

Best,

Billy Pickens

wpickens@ecacmail.org



ECAC's Youth Advisory Team members share something good that happened in 2020 and their hopes, goals and resolutions for 2021.



Something good that happened to me in 2020 was me being a virtual master. It was hard

Blood, Sweat and Tears

by Thomas G

"I am a musician. My stage name is officially Thomas. I make instrumental music and I do trumpet covers of other people's songs. I sent a video of me doing my song "Blood, Sweat and Tears" and a cover of "Alone Again" by The Weekend.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THOMAS](#)



Winner's Circle

by Robbie M

Robbie always wanted a dirt bike but



for me to get used to it at first but I felt comfortable with doing stuff virtually and most of the time I was on time. I liked being able to take classes from

my own room. I also did exercises and game nights too. And my mom and dad didn't have to worry about driving me places.

My hope for 2021 is to have a job with the Cannon Ballers. I had a great interview with them but when COVID-19 hit, the season was cancelled. I hope that I can get a job, either as a broadcaster or a statistician, with them and have a fun time working my dream job.

Nicholas B



Something good that happened to me in 2020 was that I made the basketball cheer team for my high school.

My new year goal is to get my drivers license.

Kaitlyn B



Something good that happened to me in 2020 was joining the Youth Advisory Team. I joined the Youth Advisory Team In September 2020. The reason I

joined this group is to be able to help kids with disabilities. During my time in my group, I've written an article about my school. While in this group, I've made friends by getting to meet up with

his mom always said "no you are too little". (Robbie has a chromosome deletion 16p 12.2 and growth hormone deficiency.) With some time of growing, Robbie got a dirt bike. This dirt bike was a inspiration for Robbie. He literally grew overnight!

Robbie started drag racing and is on his fourth bike. He won 2 races this year! The reaction he gets from fans is remarkable. He is going to be a professional racer one day. His mom couldn't be any prouder of him.

Robbie is one fast 11 year old. 8 seconds going 85mph!



Intensity

Lucas J

*"I submitted a song called **"Intensity"** that I created/composed using a program called LMMS that lets me create digital music. I'm sharing it because I think it would be nice for others to get to hear my music."*

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO](#)

on Tuesdays. I really look forward to meeting the group in person when Covid-19 ends.

John R



I finished a few more college classes.

My goals for 2021 is to get a 2 year degree.

Drew L



Something good about 2020 is that I like doing school at home with my Mom.

Hoping in 2021 to go to Disney World, because we had to cancel our trip twice in 2020.

Kristy B



Something good that happened to me was that I went snow tubing at the mountains for the first time.

My hope for 2021 is that I want COVID-19 to be over.

Dallas M

INTENSITY by LUCAS

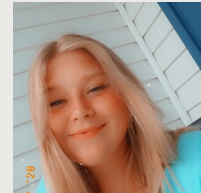
Nothing

ABOUT ME

Without Me

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.

What It's Like Living With CRPS
by Kaitlyn B



Pain. A feeling I feel everyday but I rarely allow myself to think about it or even acknowledge it. My journey with pain started when I was 14 years old. I was trying to do a cartwheel during cheerleader practice and ended up spraining my hand. That sprain was something that should have healed within a week or two. However, it did not get better with the usual ice and heat and rest. The pain just got worse and worse and became unbearable. My parents took me to the appropriate doctor who examined my wrist and hand and did numerous tests to determine what was happening that I still had pain from what should have been a fairly minor sprain. Every x-ray and MRI came back normal with no answers. The doctors even put me in a cast to see if it was tendonitis. However, as soon as the cast came off the pain was still the same. Finally, one of the specialists told my mom and me a little bit about CRPS briefly and



My name is Joseph, and I will tell you about my 2020, a year full of surprises! My Mom and I went to Carowinds on New Year's Eve 2019 to receive the 2020. This was the first surprise for me in 2020, just starting the year at an amusement park with all the Christmas lights and decorations, even a ball that was full of confetti. Right at 12:00 am, we heard the explosion that starts the fireworks and the ball coming down with the confetti getting spread through the air, like New York style! I never saw that much confetti before. My mom and I say Happy New Year to each other and hug. Immediately because that night was cold we went to Starbucks to get hot chocolate to keep us warm. But the experience that I like the most was that my family and I went to Las Vegas for Christmas vacation and to celebrate my uncle's birthday. This surprise was the best, because my Mom is teaching me how to do things by myself, she wanted me to practice my memory skills. Prior the trip, my mother was telling me everything about the check in at the airport, how to be independent checking myself at the kiosk for the flight, go through the security checkpoint, find my seat, and to put my backpack on the right place in the airplane, all by myself remembering how to do everything independently, while she was occupied in her own stuff. She acted like she didn't know me. That was a good practice for my

referred us to a specialist who dealt with chronic pain. He reviewed my medical records, my test results, examined my wrist and hand and, that day, I was diagnosed with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS).

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) is chronic neuropathic pain that follows soft-tissue or bone injury (type I) or nerve injury (type II) and lasts longer and is more severe than expected for the original tissue damage. CRPS is a form of chronic pain that usually affects an arm or a leg but may also affect other joints and muscles. The pain is out of proportion to the severity of the initial injury. In more than 90 percent of cases, CRPS is triggered by nerve trauma or injury to the affected limb that damages the thinnest sensory and autonomic nerve fibers. Symptoms of CRPS include severe burning pain, swelling, and skin color changes.

There's no known cure for CRPS, but a combination of physical therapy treatments, medicine and psychological support can help manage the symptoms. The primary goal of all treatments for complex regional pain syndrome is to increase the mobility of the affected limb. Treatment often includes drugs such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatories like Aleve or Ibuprofen or other drugs, physical therapy, sympathetic nerve blocks including a TENS unit, psychological treatments, and neuromodulation through the use of implanted spinal cord stimulators. Most of all physical therapy is essential. Goals include desensitization, strengthening, increased range of motion, and vocational rehabilitation. It is through physical therapy that I have learned to manage my pain.

With treatment, it is estimated around 85% of people with CRPS slowly

independent life skills. But I want to tell you about the surprises on the trip to Las Vegas and the road trip to Arizona to visit the Grand Canyon, these are rare red mountains because it is like a mountain but they are not, there is not grass or trees on the Grand Canyon, I researched on Google and I found that what it is, is a gorge, a deep deep cliff, all red or orange depending on the sun light. Do you know that the Grand Canyon is one of the greatest marvels created by Mother Nature on Earth? Yes, it is! If you haven't visited there, put it in your list. Another surprise on that trip was the beach in Santa Monica, California. I took my shoes off and the water was cold, that was water from the Pacific Ocean! Some people were in bathing suits, surfing and enjoying the water as it will be a summer day. I also went to Los Angeles which is a big city with a lot of traffic anytime of the day. In Los Angeles we went to visit the Hollywood gigantic sign because my cousin wanted to take pictures there, I don't really feel any excitement, but she looks very happy to be there taking selfies. Finally, Las Vegas, as I stay there for 9 days, seems to be a city like New York City, busy, full of lights, with electronics advertisements, crowded with people, traffic and there are a lot of new developments with neighborhoods of houses and apartment complexes. It is not a quiet city but at the same time is a place that seems good to live in. I told my Mom that I would like to go back and she told me that we would and that is my expectation for 2021.

My hope for 2021 that these times of Pandemia end and I can go back to be with my friends at the Special Olympics to have fun doing what I like the most sports!

Joseph R

experience a reduction in their pain and some of their symptoms in the first 2 years. I am one of those fortunate people. However, I live each day knowing that my chronic pain can flare up at any time, especially if I have an injury. I try to live my life to the fullest while still exercising caution in the activities in which I engage. CRPS will not defeat me or define who I am!



Keep Trying

by Abbey B

Hi, everyone. My name is Latisha but I go by Abbey. I'm a 15 year old girl and I have a learning disability and an IEP The Individualized Education Program,

often called the IEP, is a legal document under United States law that is developed for each public school child in the U.S. who needs special education. It is created through a team of the child's parent and district personnel who are knowledgeable about the child's needs. And I also have a chromosome disorder. A chromosome disorder is an abnormal condition due to something unusual in an individual's chromosomes. For example, Down syndrome is a chromosome disorder caused by the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21, and Turner syndrome is most often due to the presence of only a single sex chromosome: one X chromosome. My future plans are to be a labor and delivery nurse to be married and have kids one day. With my disability, it is hard sometimes for me to do school work and to count money. It can be hard, but keep trying, the more you try the better you get .



Something good that happened in 2020 was spending time with my friends at my halloween party, which of course, wasn't too big to be safe.

My new year's resolution is to learn to draw better.

Lucas J



My new year's resolution or goal is to continue my academic year in Spring Semester at Central Piedmont Community College. The other goal is to stay healthy until COVID-19 ends and try not to get sick. My next goal is to continue to stay on my positive attitude and I will learn how to advocate for myself if I don't know stuff or if I struggle. This is my destiny to begin my 2021 year and I have high hope that I will be able to stay strong with my family and I will never give up on my dreams and hope in both education and my life.

Terrell T

Entrepreneur's CORNER

SELF-DETERMINATION
SUCCESS STORY

Self-determination involves setting goals, making decisions and problem solving. Our Entrepreneur's Corner is a space for self-advocates to share how their self-determination has resulted in a successful small business or side hustle.



Tasty Pickles

by Carson L

My name is Carson and when I was in the 11th grade I started a pickle business called ***Tasty Pickles by Carson***. I had an Animal Science class that required everyone to do an agricultural project called SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience). At first, I wanted to build a



YEP's Tools for Your Toolbox features tools and resources on Self-Advocacy, Self-Determination and the

Transition to Adulthood.

Have a youth related tool or an event coming up that you would like us to feature? Please contact us at: ecacyouth@ecacmail.org



ATTENTION NC HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS with ANY TYPE OF DISABILITY!

Applications now being accepted for the 2021 Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award! Open to ANY NC High School Senior with ANY type of disability!

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.

Eligibility:

ALL North Carolina students with disabilities are eligible for nomination. Including students enrolled in the Occupation Course of Study, students who will be receiving a Graduate Certificate and students enrolled in the Future Ready Course of Study.

DEADLINE:
Wednesday, February 10, 2021

greenhouse and grow flowers to sell but I changed my mind and decided that I wanted to learn how to make pickles because I like them. They are my favorite snack. I searched for recipes on Google and found one that was easy because I didn't know how. My mom bought the ingredients and I made 12 jars of pickles. My mom took them to her job and sold them. Then, a lot of people kept asking for more pickles and asked me to make certain flavors. I started out only making Kosher Dill pickles. Kosher means garlic in pickles. Now I make 6 different flavors: Bread & Butter, Kosher Dill, Sour Dill, Spicy Dill, Sweet Dill, and Sweet Heat. The Sweet Heat is the most popular seller and it all started because of an accident. I accidentally mixed up the recipes for Sweet Dill and Spicy Dill and that made Sweet Heat. I have my own factory but it is brand new and we are waiting on the guy to put in the plumbing and insulation and sink and stuff. It's big so I can make a lot of pickles in it. I have the title for my company as CEO which means Chief Executive Officer and I am also the Iredell-Statesville Schools Honorary Superintendent because I'm a young entrepreneur.

<https://tastypicklesbycarson.com/>



For details and award application, see below:

**CLICK HERE FOR THE MCG
AWARD APPLICATION IN
ENGLISH**

**CLICK HERE FOR THE MCG
AWARD APPLICATION IN
SPANISH**

North Carolina American Indian Fund Scholarship



**Application Deadline:
March 1, 2021**

Purpose

The NC American Indian Fund was established in response to an understanding that resources for meeting the human and economic needs are limited, including scholarship assistance, funding for community based health, human services, education programs, and tribal organization infrastructure. Recognizing that gaps in funding for education needs put Indian communities at risk in many areas, education was selected as the first priority to address these critical gaps. The North Carolina American Indian Fund Scholarship program will assist American Indian students in obtaining higher education by providing scholarships to students who demonstrate a commitment to the American Indian community, extracurricular and volunteer involvement, financial need, and

Good Girl

by Arin W

When you're a kid, you're told you can do anything. That encouragement is the foundation of entrepreneurship: harnessing the potential to build an idea and make it a reality. But not all of us are told we can do anything. People with disabilities are not taught that their passions can and will influence the world.

My name is Arin, and I'm a 21-year-old woman with an intellectual disability who has an infectious personality, loves animals, and enjoys making people smile! I love baking dog treats for my service dog, Posie, also known as Good Girl, which led me to establish Arin's Good Girl Dog Treats. I believe with the right opportunities everyone is able to be a productive member of society and give back to the community.

I have learned to bake three different dog treat recipes: pumpkin peanut butter, cheese and bacon, and dragon slayers (for bad breath) using an adapted recipe book. Each page has a step that needs to be completed that I can check off before I move on to the next step of the recipe.

I then bake, dehydrate (a natural preservative), and package the treats for sale. I have established community partnerships in local vet offices and a boutique gift shop to sell the treats in addition to my online store. I follow a production schedule each week based on inventory, check our ingredient supplies, and fulfill orders for the online store and community partners.

Our mission is to show that people with different abilities are productive members of the community, and as the business grows we will be able to

academic success.

Amount & Use of Funds: \$1,000

The scholarship may be used towards any need listed under the school's total cost of attendance. The student is responsible for all other charges. This is a one-time payment.

Criteria

In order to be eligible, students must meet the following criteria:

- Minimum GPA: 2.0
- Residency Requirements: Residents of North Carolina
- High School Restrictions: None
- Plan of Study Restrictions: None
- This scholarship is restricted to American Indian students with current tribal enrollment.
- This scholarship is restricted to American Indian students with current tribal enrollment. There is a preference for NC-state recognized tribe members.

**CLICK HERE FOR THE NC
AMERICAN INDIAN
SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION**



Transition is a journey, begin NOW to plan for the trip. The Student Dream Sheet can help students set goals and share their interests and preferences.

**CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD
THE STUDENT DREAM SHEET**

employ and offer career opportunities to people with different abilities. Our team is small; right now, we are a family business with local partnerships, but we are excited to grow and serve more individuals like me.

You can follow my story on social media @arinsgoodgirldogtreats or through the online store at:

arinsgoodgirldogtreat.com



College Foundation of North Carolina has a ton on scholarships available on their website including ones specifically for students with disabilities.

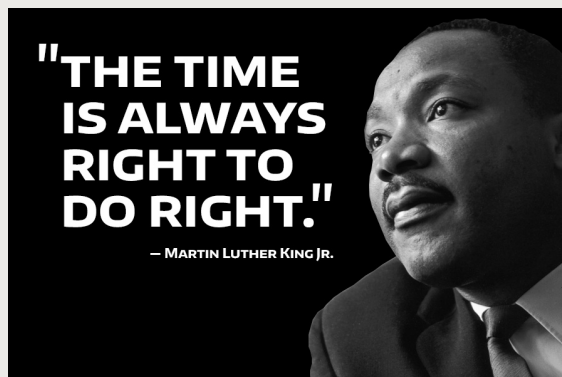
(Go to the CFNC scholarship search page below and click on eligible populations on the left to narrow your search criteria to "Disabled/Special Needs".)

**CLICK HERE TO ACCESS CFNC
SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH**

**CLICK HERE TO
SUBSCRIBE TO YEP**

YAT Member, John, shared this favorite MLK Jr. quote with us in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Martin Luther King Day is a federal holiday held on the third Monday of January. It celebrates the life and achievements of Martin Luther King Jr., who was a great leader in the civil rights movement.



Views Expressed Disclaimer

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YOUTH MATTERS *Matter*

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1-800-962-6817
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www.ecac-parentcenter.org

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