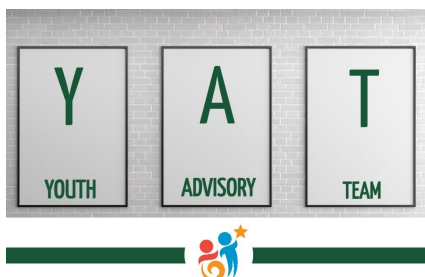


A Quarterly Publication
Produced BY & FOR NC Youth with Disabilities

**Advice From ECAC Youth Advisory Board Members to
Other Youth with Disabilities**



Clete: [Communicating your needs](#) is key—especially in school.

Jaxson: Trust in yourself and what you do.

Zay: Trust yourself

Khloe: Use your voice!

Stella: Make sure to breathe

Resource: [Understanding Self-Advocacy](#)

Grace: Don't let things that could go wrong stop you

Scout: Don't let the DIS in DISABILITY stop you.

Oliver: Don't give up and believe in yourself



Resources:

[Importance of Self Advocacy Education, a professional opinion](#)

[Learning Disabilities and Self Advocacy](#)

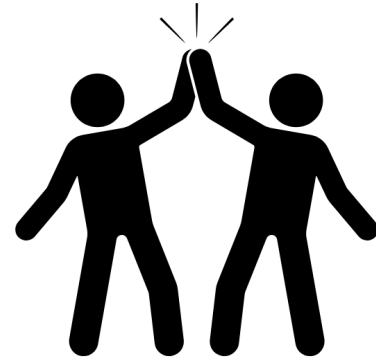
Clare: Kindness is a small act with a big IMPACT

Kelsey: Find the right people that can trust you and be there for you. Try to be nice to yourself.

Matthew: Speak up for yourselves and others.

Neveah: You always find your people somehow.

Nicholas: You can always fall back on your team.



Resource: [Building a Village](#)

Cole Abernathy Named 2025 Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award Winner



The Exceptional Children's Assistance Center is pleased to announce the winner of the 2025 Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award: Cole Abernathy. Cole recently graduated from Bunker Hill High School in Claremont, NC. While a student, he was very involved in athletics as the football team manager, basketball manager and athlete on the baseball team. Outside of school he volunteered in his community as a member of his church's youth group, summer volunteer at Camp Linn Haven and worked with the backpack program, Corner Table. Congratulations Cole!



ECAC would also like to recognize, James Dover, runner-up for the Matthew C. Graziadei Achievement Scholarship Award. James recently graduated from South Point High School in Belmont, NC., where he ranked first in his class. He is also an All-State tennis player and very involved in his community as a Deaf advocate and volunteer for Abilities Tennis of NC. James plans to attend a four year university and further his education in an area that will directly support others with hearing loss.

[Click Here to Read James' Essay](#)

North Carolina's Got Talent!

YEP's **NCGT** column is here to put a spotlight on the many talents and abilities of N.C. Youth & Young Adults with Disabilities ages 5 to 26. 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!

And the Winners Are...

Handmade Lantern

"This lantern was created for a local lantern parade. Albert used wire and tissue paper. He made his own pattern and took his own measurements and completed it without any adult assistance from August to October!"



Albert S.
Gaston County, NC
Age 15

"Repurposed Art"



"My art represents me: my creativity, my mood, my likes and my expression. I love happy colors and to repurpose household items into interesting art."

Orianna D.
Mecklenburg County, NC
Age 13



"This is Why I Love You"



"Amiin loves music, he is very passionate about singing. He ranges in different genres such as gospel, pop, hip hop and rap. He performs for churches, banquets, school talent shows and karaoke anywhere we go."

Amiin M.
Durham County, NC
Age 14

"Still I Rise in Color"



"I submitted a poem that captures the heart of our mission - spreading hope to those with chronic illness and special needs. I hope it's featured to inspire others and share a message of strength and encouragement."

Katie H.
Franklin County, NC
Age 25

[Read Katie's Poem](#)

"Reflections"



"Sometimes, when words don't come easily, art becomes the voice. For Prince, a Deaf 14 year-old with a developmental language delay, creating art is how he connects and speaks to the world around him. His work is powerful not just because of the detail, but because of the story behind it - a young Black homeschooler turning silence into expression."

Prince H.
Gaston County, NC
Age 14



At the North Carolina Annual Inclusion Summit, held June 12th-13th at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, five of our youth team members shared their personal stories as young people with disabilities, reflecting on both the successes and challenges they've faced

throughout their lives—not just in school, but in their communities, friendships, and families as well. Their honesty and courage gave everyone a powerful reminder of how deeply important it is to listen to and learn from their experiences. These young voices highlighted how inclusion, understanding, and the right support can make a lasting difference. Their stories inspired hope, reminded us of the strength our children carry, and encouraged everyone in the room to keep pushing for a more accepting and supportive world.

Opportunities for Youth and Young Adults!



Apply for ALP-NC's 2025 Leadership Cohort!

The Ability Leadership Program of North Carolina (ALP-NC) is now accepting applications for its next 2025 Leadership Cohort! ALP-NC prepares leaders to engage in collective disability rights advocacy.

Deadline to apply is July 3, 2025.

[Click here to learn more and apply](#)



Planning For the Future

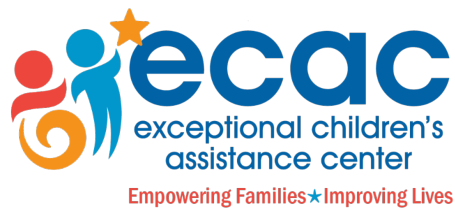
If you are a teen with a disability or someone close to a teen with a disability, this site can help you explore and prepare for the future. Turning 18 is a big deal and taking some actions now will help you get ready. So, consider your choices, explore the possibilities, and take action now to prepare for age 18!

[Click here to visit beforeage18.org](http://beforeage18.org)

[CLICK HERE FOR A PDF VERSION OF YEP](#)



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

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