



A Quarterly Publication
Produced BY & FOR NC Youth with Disabilities

Self-Advocacy

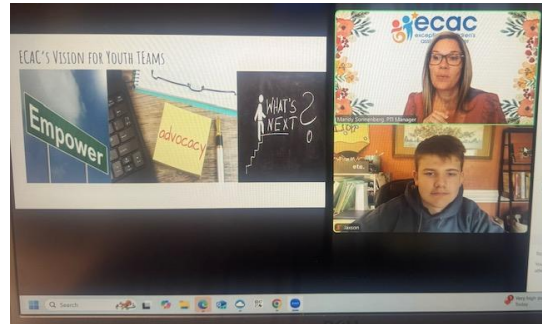
Here's the deal: Self-advocacy is basically your personal superpower. Being able to speak up about what you want, need, and care about can change the game—especially as you're stepping up to more independence in school, work, and life. Think about it: when you're able to stand up for yourself, you're way more likely to make things happen. Want a different approach to a class project? Have concerns about how a group activity is going? Need to balance your schedule or take a mental health day? That's all self-advocacy. And the cool part? The more you practice it, the easier it gets to set boundaries, work toward your goals, and make sure people know what's important to you.

**Taking a Peek into the Lives of our
Youth Group Self-Advocates**

Jaxson

Hi, I'm Jaxson Eroh. I'm in the 8th grade, and I have Autism. I think it is important to be a

self-advocate because it helps me get the support I need, helps me gain confidence, and develops skills I'll need as an adult. Recently, I've been a self-advocate by participating in my school's 504 meetings, telling my teachers what I need and how they can best help me succeed. In class, I know myself and my needs well enough to speak up and ask for help or accommodations. I also participate in state-wide self-advocacy presentations, telling others about my disability and my journey. Self-advocacy can be many things, from asking for help to sharing information about yourself with others. You can be a self-advocate just by speaking up and asking for what you need.



Tsega

My name is Tsega Downes, and I started Cookies 4 Charity in 2019. Cookies 4 Charity is a non-profit business that sells cookies and donates them to different kinds of charities. However, our focus is now on helping disadvantaged kids in Ethiopia. Our hope is to raise money by the end of this school year to buy the kids backpacks and shoes that'll help them going into next year.



This is a picture of me baking cookies to sell and give to charity.

Nicholas

Hi everybody! My name is Nicholas Batley and I'm from Mooresville, NC. I am 25 years old and was diagnosed with Autism/Aspergers at age 4. I graduated from Mooresville High School in 2018, with honors. I currently work at the NASCAR Hall of Fame in Uptown Charlotte, and with the Kannapolis Cannon Ballers, which is a professional, minor league baseball team. I like to read the Bible, watch preschool shows, family movies, game shows, and sports. I also enjoy time in my room watching YouTube videos. My dream is to be a professional Sports Broadcaster/Announcer. Some activities that I am a part of include playing baseball with the Miracle League of Charlotte, as well as announcing some of their Friday night games, bowling in the Dream to Achieve League, and volunteering with my church's vacation bible school. I also attend a weekly bible study group called Agape, a part of Community Bible Study.

I have learned to advocate for myself starting in high school when I participated and later, led my IEP meeting. I was able to tell everyone what I thought was working for me and what was not. In my first job at Academy Sports and Outdoors, I advocated for myself, by telling my boss that it was easier for me to work with a list of things I was supposed to do each shift. That helped me to stay focused and accomplish the things I needed to get done.



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 gift card in the mail!

And the Winners Are...

"Painted Dragon"

Liam M.
Iredell County, NC
Age 11

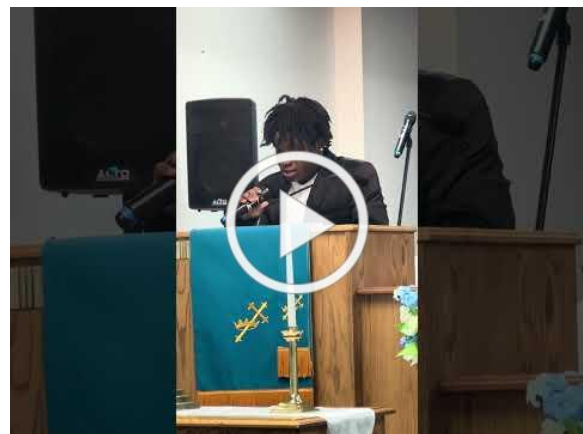
"This painted dragon is my favorite art I've ever made. I love dragons! I worked really hard on it and I want other people to see it."



"Jesus Cares"



Alijah Battle
Nash County, NC
Age 15



"My message to my church family about different storms in my life and how I can always call on Jesus for help. Giving this message helped me not be nervous in front of a large group. I gained confidence and realized my ability to overcome difficult times if you believe and work hard."

"My Favorite Songs"

Aydan C.
Wake County, NC
Age 12

"Aydan loves to play the drums, but his cerebral palsy slows him down from being able to play like he wants. This video is a remix of some of his favorite songs to play. We hope it can show other families that you can do anything your heart desires."



"My Purple Dress"



Audrey Rodgers
Mecklenburg County, NC
Age 15

"I am sending in a dress I made to let other kids with any disability know that they can sew too."

"Magic Tricks"

Weston McGinnis
Gaston County, NC
Age 14

"Here is a short video of just one of the amazing card tricks Weston can do. He amazes all around him with his skills as a card magician."



"Ghast Attack - A Short Story"

Rowan Hlavay
Alamance County, NC
Age 16



"Ghast Attack is a short story written from the perspective of a player, illustrating the experience of facing the hostile mobs of the Nether, Minecraft's fiery dimension. I am sharing my writing with others who I hope will enjoy it."

[Read Rowan's Short Story](#)

[What is Self-Advocacy
Tips for Speaking Up](#)

[Understanding
Self - Advocacy](#)

[The importance of
Self-Advocacy](#)



[Best Practices in Self-Advocacy
Skill Building](#)



[Learning Disabilities
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More Resources



Easterseals Southern California (ESSC)—which assists more than 18,000 people with disabilities has launched a provocative PSA campaign, D1\$@B1L*tY is Not a Dirty Word, aimed at creating a brash, new dialogue around disability acceptance and inclusion.

"We often fear what we don't understand and conversations around disability are avoided. The fear of not knowing what to say, how to act or how to behave divides us, not unites us. We whisper it or avoid it altogether, as if disability is a dirty word. Disability is not a dirty word. It's a source of pride. It's part of being human. And for more than 25% of all U.S. residents, it's a part of who we are."

[Learn More](#)

Friendship Toolkit

THE POWER OF INCLUSION



[Read More](#)

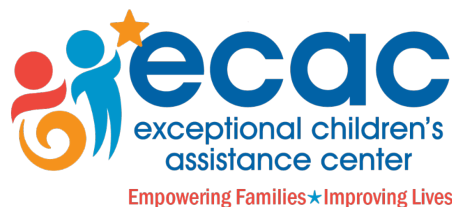
Check out this great resource from Shutterfly!

Friendship Toolkit - At Shutterfly, we make life's experiences unforgettable. And in a world where celebrating life's most memorable moments may feel challenging to some, Shutterfly knows how important a friend can be to those who aren't always seen or celebrated for who they are.

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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.

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