

Virginia Student Honored With International Award

Arlington, Va., March 1, 2020 — In February, **Caroline Arnette** of Williamsburg, Va., received the **2020 Yes I Can Award** from the **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)**.



In eighth grade, Caroline was plagued by nightmares so vivid she thought they were real. Paralyzed, she couldn't move or call for help. She feared going to bed. No matter how long she slept, she never felt rested. Despite being an outstanding student with a life-long passion for learning, she was unable to stay awake in school and retain material. Once a happy child, she believed she was a failure and became anxious, lost, and hopeless.

Fortunately, Caroline was able to find a dedicated specialist who diagnosed her with Narcolepsy with Cataplexy and explained her symptoms, which had grown to include temporary, full-body paralysis from strong emotions (Cataplexy) that caused her to collapse countless times an hour.

Once Caroline started treatment, her life turned around. Today, she is third in her class, a varsity rower, and a member of her state finalist Scholastic Bowl team who is passionate about advocating for others with rare diseases.

In her fight to help people like her receive their own diagnoses, Caroline was featured in a series of videos for MoreThanTired.com and became a Youth Ambassador (YA) for the Narcolepsy Network, even training this year's new advocates and was appointed as the first Lead YA.

Through her work, Caroline has advocated on Capitol Hill with the Rare Disease Legislative Advocacy (RDLA) group to her senators and congresswoman and is a member of the RDLA youth advocacy program. She has done a presentation to the York County school district's nurses and participated in a MoreThanTired Facebook Live Q&A session for World Narcolepsy Day. Not only is she writing her story for Patient Worthy, but she is also scheduled to present to the pediatricians and nurse practitioners at Pediatric Associates of Williamsburg/CHKD Health System and will attend the World Orphan Drug Congress as a representative of the White Sutton Syndrome Foundation.

A senior in high school, Caroline plans to major in neuroscience and public policy in college in Washington, D.C., and pursue a career in patient advocacy. In the words of her nominators, "she has already dedicated her life to fight for patients with rare diseases and will never stop fighting."

CEC is proud to honor Caroline with this award in the Self-Advocacy category. Caroline received her award at the Yes I Can Award Ceremony on February 7, 2020, at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Ore., as part of the CEC 2020 Convention & Expo. The Yes I Can program recognizes the accomplishments of 12 students with exceptionalities in six categories: Academics, Arts, School & Community Activities, Self-Advocacy, Technology, and Transition.



The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the educational success of children and youth with exceptionalities that accomplishes its mission through advocacy, standards, and professional development. Learn more about CEC at cec.sped.org.

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