Spencerport Student Honored With International Award

Arlington, Va., March 1, 2020 — In February, **Nelani Colletti** of Spencerport, NY, received the **2020 Yes I Can Award** from the **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)**.

A senior at Homelife Academy, Nelani has overcome many challenges to get where she is today. In elementary school, she had a severe speech impediment and was bullied for this as a child. However, after nine years of competing, she won the TN 4-H state public speaking contest last year.

In fourth grade, Nelani was diagnosed with dyslexia, which made academics extremely difficult. As an eighth grader, she was also diagnosed with the genetic disease, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), which causes her to have physical limitations.

Despite these challenges, she maintained an "A" average throughout high school and scored a 31 on her ACT exam.

"It was very hard for me," says Nelani. "Especially with my diagnosis of EDS, I've often felt very alone. I'm proud to say none of my achievements are the result of natural talent, but rather hard work and determination. Now I am determined to make sure no one else feels the same way I feel. I now help other kids in my community through 4-H who have the same problems as I do. It has been very inspiring to help kids become better than I am."

CEC was proud to honor Nelani with this award in the Academics category 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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