

Pennsylvania Student Honored With International Award

Arlington, Va., March 1, 2020 — In February, **Trey DelGrosso** of Swiftwater, Penn., received the **2020 Yes I Can Award** from the **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)**.



“There is nothing wrong with me.” This is the mantra around which 13-year-old Trey DelGrosso has chosen to live his life; and it is a message he is determined to share with others.

An eighth grader at Pocono Mountain East Junior High, Trey was diagnosed with a connective tissue disorder, cleft palate, developmental delays, celiac disease, attention deficit disorder, and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at an early age. When he started intermediate school, the sensory, academic, and social demands overwhelmed him, and he began to experience anxiety and panic attacks.

“In sixth grade, I was having trouble with peer relations. Whenever I would stand, clap, squeak, or jump, they would stare at me,” says Trey. “They would make mean comments, and I would just feel very, very bad. I was so sad.” That’s when his developmental pediatrician recommended that he speak to his classmates and teachers about what it is like to live with ASD.

Under the guidance of two very special teachers, Trey took this suggestion and ran with it. After his initial presentation, he noticed a visible change in his classmates, who viewed him as a leader and even began to share challenges they face in their own lives.

“They were so interested. It was pretty awesome,” Trey says. “They accept me for who I am. ... I have more friends. I talk to more people now, and it’s great.”

When Trey saw what a difference sharing his story made for himself and his fellow students, he knew he wanted to make a difference for others as well. Since his first speech, he has taken his presentation to boy-scout troops, local colleges, a 4-H club, a Disabilities Awareness Nights, and the Lifeshare Conference at Kalahari Convention Center in Pocono Manor, Penn. He also spoke at the Lehigh Valley Employment Coalition Recognition Breakfast, the Arc of Lehigh Valley, and Celiac Education Day at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. He has done interviews for Fox 56, WNEP Channel 16, THE PEAK TV, and other news outlets, and even threw the first pitch for the Philadelphia Phillies last May.

CEC is proud to honor Trey with this award in the Self-Advocacy category. He received the 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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