



For Immediate Release

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## **Florida Student Honored with International Award**

**Arlington, Va., February 27, 2023** – Mathias Misener of Gainesville, FL, received the 2023 Yes I Can Award for Community & School Activities from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

The Yes I Can Awards celebrate the achievements of children and youth with exceptionalities, encouraging these individuals to seek their highest potential and increase public awareness of the abilities, aspirations, and personal qualities of those with disabilities.

Mathias is a role model for helping create a community. When he transitioned from a small, private school to an enormous high school, the sheer number of students and new social situation was very overwhelming. He went from knowing everyone in his school to barely knowing anyone in a single class. Instead of giving up on making friends or getting involved, Mathias took the recommendation of his teacher and joined the Student Council.

While on the Student Council, Mathias worked to help other students feel like they belong. He showed his fellow students that everyone, including students with disabilities, could be an integral part of their school. He worked with fellow council members to run food drives, raise money for school activities, decorate for celebrations, and host award shows. He not only set a powerful example for others, but he also found ways to actively bring students together. He even helped start the Best Buddies program in his school, or “Bobcat Buddies” as they call it, to pair people with disabilities up with people who don’t have a disability to make friends and learn from each other.

Mathias said “I like to think that since I showed the rest of my student council class that since I’m so cool [they’d think] other students with disabilities would be cool too....Being on student council made me want to go to college and promote school activities at college!” He is very excited to compete in the Special Olympics World Games in Unified Basketball this June in Berlin, Germany.



The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to high-quality education that is inclusive and equitable for individuals with disabilities. Learn more about CEC at <https://exceptionalchildren.org/>.

Thank you to [Pearson](#) for their continued support of the Yes I Can Awards!