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**The Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children**

**32nd Annual**

**Yes I Can! Awards**



Sam is a young man who was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 3. Early on, it was thought that he would never be able to express himself verbally or through other formats. Hard work and determination allow Sam to learn in an inclusive classroom and he loves to talk to his friends and family. Sam has a great love for animation, which has proven to be an avenue for self expression. His artwork is showcased in the illustrations for Exploring with Sam, a colouring book about Winnipeg Beach, and his award-winning children’s book “I am Sam and Yes I Can”. One day Sam hopes to work for Disney and Pixar. In 2020, he received an MCEC Award in the Arts category, and is very proud to be asked to create this year’s cover. *Sam Mercier Artist, cover page*



The Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC) is a provincial unit of The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). The CEC is a major professional organization dedicated to improving the quality of education for exceptional children and youth with a range of abilities and disabilities.

**BELIEF STATEMENTS**

We believe that…

* all individuals have a right to an education
* all individuals have the ability to learn and attain self-fulfillment
* participation of individuals with exceptionalities enriches all communities
* education is a collaborative process involving learners, educators, families, communities, governments, businesses, and industries
* qualified professionals are essential to meeting the diverse learning needs of all individuals
* all persons working in the field of education have a continuing responsibility to improve their practices
* governments have the responsibility to ensure the provision of a free and appropriate education for all individuals

We believe in…

* advocating for the advancement of education of individuals with exceptionalities
* equitable access to and meaningful participation in quality educational opportunities for all individuals
* the opportunity for lifelong education for all individuals with exceptionalities
* the development of preventative programs and services
* the process of collaboration to meet the diverse learning needs of all individuals
* supporting persons to improve their educational practices
* a provincial focus for professional activities

**The Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children Presents:**

**The 32nd Annual MCEC Awards**

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| **P**  **ROGRAM** | **Welcome and**  **Opening Remarks** | Program Co-Chairs   * Teresa Hampton * Carole Hebert |
| **Greetings** | Joanna Kaptein, President of MCEC  Honourable Minister Wayne Ewasko |
| **Awards MC** | Glen Cassie  Public Affairs Specialist  Communications Services Manitoba  Government of Manitoba |
| **Presentations** | *Yes I Can*! Awards   * Academics   Certificates of Recognition  *Yes I Can*! Awards   * School and Community Activities   Educational Assistant of the Year  *Yes I Can*! Awards   * Self-Advocacy   Teacher of the Year  *Yes I Can*! Awards   * Transition   Academic Scholarships  Transition Scholarship |
| **Closing Remarks** | Program Co-Chairs   * Teresa Hampton * Carole Hebert |

**Yes I Can! Awards**

The MCEC *Yes I Can*! Awards are presented to exceptional children and/or youth to recognize their achievements in the following categories:

* Academics
* School and Community Activities
* Self-Advocacy
* Transition

**Academics**

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| **Phoenix School**  **Nolan Lawless St. James -Assiniboia School Division** | |
|  | Nolan is a hard-working student whose dogged determination to learn has seen him make huge growth in the last 15 months. His laughter and enthusiasm with everyone around him is contagious. He has developed his communication skills which he loves to use when he is reading or doing art with his friends. He has become a very good listener, too. Nolan is developing his fine motor skills and has become more independent in using markers and eating utensils. He has even started standing on his own and taking a few steps! Nolan continues to surprise everyone with what he is accomplishing and is a true representative of ‘Yes I Can’ determination |
| **Buchanan School**  **Jackson Legault St. James -Assiniboia School Division** | |
|  | Jackson is a Grade 3 student at Buchanan School. He has grown so much academically - improving his writing skills and he has worked very hard on his fine motor and artistic skills, too. Jackson loves to read and enjoys playing games. He has even started to share his ideas and presentations with the class. He loves playing with his friends, too. Everyone is proud of Jackson’s ‘Yes I Can’ attitude! |

**Certificate of Recognition**

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| **Dalhousie School**  **Funmi Ashaye Pembina Trails School Division** | | |
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| Funmi has worked as an educational assistant at Dalhousie School for the past four years. She has been a key player in supporting a student who tends to communicate with their body and was unable to regulate sufficiently, resulting in a reduced school daily plan. Funmi participated in specialized training in Augmentative Alternative Communication devices, enabling her to effectively model alternative ways for the student to communicate via Proloquo2go and core language. Funmi is a masterful co-regulator, who is also resourceful. Her efforts have resulted in building up the resilience, stamina and delay tolerance of the student with whom she works, to the point where the length of the school day could be increased. Funmi does all of this with grace and consistently gives 100%. |

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| **Collège St. Norbert Collegiate**  **Jackson Enns Seine River School Division** | |
|  | Jackson is a grade 9 student who supports one of his classmates in a way that is exceptional beyond his years. During Foods and Nutrition class, Jackson supports his classmate by encouraging her participation in all conversations within their kitchen lab group and prompting her so she can participate safely gathering ingredients and during the cooking process. He is consistently patient and kind and provides ongoing support without prompting or direction from his teachers. |

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| **River East Collegiate**  **Cody Kopacz River East Transcona School Division** | |
|  | Cody has been working as an Educational Assistant at River East Collegiate for two years. He is a calming, reassuring presence for all of the students with whom he works, and has a gift for making connections with everyone. He was one of very few who made connections with a particular student who often sat with his hood up and head down without communicating. With Cody’s support, this student “came to life” and began earning credits, participating in community and school-based work experience and was enjoying school. When supporting students in work experience placements, Cody skillfully encourages independence by allowing students to make mistakes and then guiding them towards solutions. As a result, students build skills they will use in the world of work and in life. Cody is a positive role model for the youth that he supports, and all students in general. His guidance and excellent problem-solving skills result in students increasing confidence and independence as they move toward post-school life. |

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| **Robert Andrews School**  **Kaylee Pescitelli River East Transcona School Division** | |
|  | Kaylee is transitioned from grade 5 at Dr. F.W.L. Hamilton School to grade 6 at Robert Andrews School this fall. She has been nominated for a Certificate of Recognition by teachers from both schools, as well as by her parents. In grade 5, Kaylee noticed that one of her peers (CB) was unable to communicate her needs and wanted her to experience life as a carefree, happy 10 year old. Kaylee went out of her way to do research about Autism, learned some sign language and talked to adults in her school to learn ways she could connect and make life easier for CB. As Kaylee reached out to CB intuitively and inquisitively, CB developed more confidence in relationships and then more independence. As they prepared for the transition to middle school, Kaylee was by CBs side to smooth this important transition to a new environment and new group of people. The connection between the two girls was not just a typical friendship, but a unique and special bond, where they bring out the best in each other. |

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| **Dalhousie School**  **Karam Shuker Pembina Trails School Division** | |
| Karam has worked as an Educational Assistant at Dalhousie School for over 6 years. The school team also depends on her to interpret Arabic for communication between teachers and parents. This helps calm many situations. In addition, Karam gains the respect and trust of the students with whom she works, by consistently demonstrating patience and empathy, kindness and caring in all interactions. Karam helps students feel like valued members of the school. She builds their confidence and holds them to high expectations in a way that encourages them to take the necessary risks to achieve. She brings a positive energy and attentiveness to the classroom, resulting in students being eager to learn. |

**School and Community Activities**

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| **Ecole Ste. Anne Immersion School**  **Austin Godin Seine River School Division** | |
|  | Austin is a confident and important contributor to his school community. Austin’s main goals have been to become a confident contributing member of his school and build his French language skills. His consistent presentation of the morning announcements make for a great way to start everyone’s day. He was a positive, supportive member of the basketball team and taught students that collaborating and cheering each other on is the ultimate win for everyone. Austin shares his gifts of empath and kindness with everyone and his classmates shared that he is always there to help and “everyone is happier when he is in the room.” Austin is an inspiration to everyone! |

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| **Ecole Powerview School**  **Addison Simard-Fontaine Sunrise School Division** | |
|  | Addison is a Grade 12 student who teachers describe as the ‘loudest heartbeat in the community’. She is a friend to everyone in the school and a bright light in everything she does both in the school and in the community. From running the coffee cart, planning the community garden, and delivering breakfasts as part of the Breakfast Program, Addison takes the time to truly get to know people. Addison has many talents, but her nurturing personality shines most when she is doing recess duty with the Grade 1 class. These duties also build Addison’s skills from telling time, organizing herself and knowing how to be safe in the community. She ‘loves doing it for the kids’ but we are thrilled to be able to recognize her for the award winner that she is.  . |
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| **River East Collegiate**  **Alexander Wasyliw River East Transcona School Division** | |
|  | Alexander has worked very hard to learn how to be his own self advocate and reflect on how to be the best person he can be. Alexander had to learn how to best navigate group situations so he could be an active member of his school community. He has even extended those connections beyond the classroom or school and maintains friendships he first developed during gamers group. His creativity is evident in how he presents – including using LEGO scenes to retell a Greek myth in his AP English class and he has acted, written, directed, sound recorded and made costumes and  props producing five different 30-minute films through the Manitoba Theatre for Young People. In the community Alexander was an alter server, sang in the choir and assisted the cantor. Alexander puts it best when he says “I have grown from a meek, shy person who could barely talk to someone in the halls to a funny, outgoing and charismatic person, one who went from fearing almost all forms of social interaction, to someone who can just barely find the time to fit it all in.” Now that is a “Yes I Can” attitude! |

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| **Educational Assistant of the Year**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Nichole Craig Phoenix School**  **Nominee Educational Assistant of the Year St. James Assiniboia School Division** | | | Nicole demonstrates creativity, proficiency in technology, reliability, communication skills and job knowledge. She works collaboratively with classroom teachers, clinicians and student services staff for the benefit of students. She has the ability to make caring connections with students, helping them feel safe and willing to take risks to expand their learning. For example, she knows the words to their favourite songs, favourite lines from a movie and their favourite dance moves. Nicole has a desire to expand her own knowledge and skills to create the best learning environment possible for the students she supports. Her skillful use of Pictello and Proloquo2go have a profound impact on the learning and communication skills of the students who have come to depend upon these valuable tools. Nicole goes above and beyond the expectations of her role to show students she cares about them. | |  | | |  | |   **Kai Solomon George Waters Middle School**  **Nominee Educational Assistant of the Year St. James-Assiniboia School Division** | | |
| Working with the classroom teacher, Kai helps create a classroom culture of acceptance and inclusion, where all students feel welcomed and respected. Anybody who knows Kai enjoys being around them because they create a fun, safe atmosphere through a unique sense of humour that is well-suited to middle school. Kai finds innovative ways to include students such as running an ASL Club where any student can learn to sign. Kai has been instrumental in creating positive and safe spaces for LGBTQ2S+ students, while providing education and awareness for all. Kai is an advocate for students and encourages them to accept themselves as they navigate their way through middle school. Kai recognizes the importance of learning beyond the classroom and uses their experience to help others as a speaker for the United Way. Kai also works with groups at the Rainbow Resource Centre to create safe spaces for others who are on their journeys. Kai is a role model and a valued member of the school community. |

**SELF-ADVOCACY**

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| **Collège St. Norbert Collegiate**  **Ashtyn Taylor Seine River School Division** | |
|  | Ashtyn has had many challenges with school and had had to learn how to cope with the ups and downs of life and learn to thrive in many different environments. He has developed self confidence, social and coping skills to become a confident high school student after spending a number of years in an alternative education setting. He has learned to independently utilize self-regulation strategies which has allowed him to be a successful member of many extra-curricular activities. He has even been a guest goalie for another high school which won the City League! Ashton has set and reached many of his goals, caught up academically and has become a confident, compassionate member of his school community. |

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| **Dr. F.W.L. Hamilton School**  **Kaity Linton River East Transcona School Division** | |
|  | Kaity joined Dr. F.W.L. Hamilton School in Grade 4 and quickly demonstrated that her Cerebral Palsy would not keep her down. She has learned to move through her environments with her motorized wheelchair. Even when she faced obstacles (like snow and ice on the playground), she used her problem solving skills to find solutions. If she can’t come up with a solution, she puts her advocacy skills into play and is always willing to try solutions suggested by others. Kaity is always determined to do her best, to promote awareness of CP and inclusion and continually shows us how to persevere with resiliency and determination. Her positive attitude and kind, friendly manner shows us all the Yes I Can attitude |

**Teacher of the Year**

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| **Becky Isaac Manitoba School for the Deaf**  **Teacher of the Year** | |
| Becky has worked as a teacher at Manitoba School for the Deaf for 17 years. She consistently works collaboratively with members of the school support team to establish goals and create opportunities for her students’ academic and personal development. Becky demonstrates creativity and innovation in developing programming for her students. One example of authentic work experience created by Becky is the ‘Coffee Cart Project’. Every Friday morning, Becky’s students organized orders, shopped and served coffee and other hot beverages to staff at the school, followed by clean-up and documenting their earnings. Becky inspires her students to be the best people they can be. She is a caring role model, pitching in for the benefit of the community and finding ways for her students to do the same. They bake for the bake sale fundraiser, keep the gardens around the school looking lovely for all to see, and lead the ‘random acts of kindness’ initiative for the school. Becky’s commitment to her students and their families shows in her willingness to offer support outside of class time, such as answering questions and offering resources to parents to use at home, delivering gifts and meals to the families of her students in times of loss, and collecting donations of clothing and food to support families in times of need. She views each student as an individual with limitless potential. She taps into that potential to create unique learning experiences that help them grow and develop as they transition to post-school life. |

**Transition**

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| **Portage La Prairie Collegiate**  **Marnia Francis Portage La Prairie School Division** | |
|  | Marnia was a very quiet young lady when she joined the Senior Lifeskills Program at Portage La Prairie Collegiate 5 years ago. In fact her speech was inaudible. She started using an augmentative communication device called a Tobii Dynavox Indi which started her on the way to now being able to use her own voice to be heard right across the room. She is now able to speak with both staff and peers and have her voice heard. Marnia has demonstrated that no matter what obstacles come her way, her ‘Yes I Can’ attitude will allow her to be the best that she can be. Way to go Marnia! |

**Arborg Collegiate Institute**

**Delaney Harper Evergreen School Division**

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|  | Delaney is a pleasant, independent, hard working young man who is popular and respected in his school and community. He has developed many skills that he is able to demonstrate at his job at the local restaurant. Delaney uses his AAC devise to communicate and can let others know what he wants. Everyone at Arborgate Collegiate has a story to share about Delaney and his positive attitude while cooking, woodworking or showcasing his artistic talent. In the words of his teacher “One thousand words could not sum up how worthy Delaney is of a Yes I Can award.” |

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| **MCEC Scholarships**  The Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children will award four scholarships of $750 each in 2022. Three are Academic Scholarships available to support grade 12 or returning university students residing in Manitoba who are pursuing a career directly related to working with persons with exceptionalities.  One is a Transition Scholarship to a student residing in Manitoba with exceptional needs who is transitioning from high school to after school life, such as post-secondary education, job training or employment.  The Transition Scholarship and one of the Academic Scholarships are presented through a donation by the Student Services Administrators Association of Manitoba in memory of Marilyn Taylor. Marilyn worked in a variety of roles throughout her career, in support of children and youth with exceptional needs. |
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**Academic Scholarships**

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| **Minnedosa Collegiate**  **Torynn Dmytriw Rolling River School Division** | |
| Torynn is a high-achieving student who has been on the Honour Roll at Minnedosa Collegiate throughout her high school career. In addition, she participates and takes leadership roles in extra-curricular activities at school, supports others by volunteering in her community, and works part time caring for the children of a neighbour. Torynn puts deep thought into making sure that everything that happens at her school is inclusive of all students. She consistently demonstrates a strong work ethic, sense of responsibility, leadership, compassion and charisma that are well beyond her years. One of children for whom Torynn provides care lives with special needs. It was this experience that made Torynn realize that she wants to be an occupational therapist. She wants to watch children work their way up to success, while using their bad days to strategize for their good days. Torynn’s planned career path of occupational therapy is a perfect fit for her exceptional academic skills and caring personality and will allow her to continue her goal of creating a safe and inclusive environment for everyone. This scholarship is presented in memory of Marilyn Taylor. |

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| **Rohit Gupta University of Manitoba** | |
| Rohit is a third-year psychology honours student who aspires to become a Developmental Psychologist and to advocate for increased investments to support child development. As a student, Rohit demonstrates excellent ability in research theory, design and analysis in behavioural and psychological sciences. Rohit is able to maintain a competitive GPA while in a full course load, alongside volunteering and working. He leads by example amongst his peers and colleagues. Rohit gives hours of his precious time volunteering as a crisis counsellor at Klinic, a Research Assistant at Hearts and Minds Laboratory at U of M, the Students Association, and is on the Board of Inclusion Winnipeg. Rohit’s passion is be a voice for children/children with exceptionalities, to ensure equal resources to every child regardless of their color, race, ethnicity, or religion. | |

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| **Collège St. Norbert Collegiate**  **Rylynn Palichuk Seine River School Division** |

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| Rylynn excels in academics and has achieved honour role status during each of her high school years at Collège St. Norbert Collegiate. She is mature, out-going and open-minded, and is one of the first to offer to assist a classmate when they are struggling. Rylynn has participated in the Girl Guides programs for several years, where she grew into leadership roles supporting younger members. Rylynn also contributes to other volunteer efforts in her church and community, while also gaining some paid work experiences. Rylynn’s goal is to work in the field of Law to support troubled youth and victims of domestic violence or abuse. Rylynn’s dynamic personality, enthusiasm and positive attitude will help her succeed at whatever she sets her mind to. |

**Transition Scholarship**

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| **West Kildonan Collegiate**  **Morgan Laarveld Seven Oaks School Division** | |
| Morgan struggled through several years of schooling due to a Learning Disability. She feels fortunate to have found the support she needed to help her grow academically. In high school, her hard work and persistence resulted in her being on the honour role from grades 9-11. Morgan has become a ‘master of self-advocacy’ letting her support team know what she needs and what she no longer needs. Morgan is interested in supporting others and is not afraid of hard work. She continues to learn more about learning disabilities and has started an Instagram page where she shares her experiences for the benefit of others. She dreams of post-secondary education, travel and starting her own business, and hopes her experiences will inspire others with learning disabilities to pursue their dreams. This scholarship is presented in memory of Marilyn Taylor. |

**Yes I Can!**

I work a little harder every single day

It takes a little longer for me to find my way

I try a little harder

And I get a little farther

And now I just want to say…

**Chorus**:

I may not run as fast as you

I may not come in first it’s true

But I believe in who I am

This voice inside my head speaks

Dreams…hopes and mountain peaks

I believe that *Yes I Can*!

I speak a little softer but I can still be heard

I’m like a baby robin among a flock of birds

But I can leave my nest

Spread these wings fly like the rest

And I won’t settle for any less

**Chorus**:

I may not read as many words

And pages can become a blur

But I believe in who I am

This voice inside my head speaks

Dreams…hopes and mountain peaks

I believe that *Yes I Can*!

And you can see it in my eyes

This glow that comes from deep inside

Because I believe in who I am…

This voice inside my head speaks…

Dreams…hopes and mountain peaks

I believe in *Yes I* *Can*!

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February 2007

**Yes I Can! Awards**

**A Special THANK YOU to:**

**Ceremony MC**

Glen Cassie

Communications Coordinator

Communications Services Manitoba

Government of Manitoba

**Greetings and Presenter**

Joanna Kaptein, President of MCEC

**A special thank you to:**

* Administrators Association of Manitoba
* Worker Bee TV
* MCEC Past Presidents
* Manitoba Education and Training
* Regehr’s Printing
* SSAAM – Metro (Student Services)
* SSAAM – Provincial (Student Services Administrators Association of Manitoba)
* Winnipeg Jets
* Numerous personal donations from MCEC Yes I Can! supporters

**Sponsorship**

The Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for students with special needs. The *Yes I Can!* Awards highlight the achievements of those students.

The MCEC and the *Yes I Can!* committee are seeking donations to continue the work they do as advocates for students, parents, and educators. All donations will be recognized in the newsletter, and all individuals or companies will receive receipts for amounts over $10.00 for tax purposes. More information is available at www.manitobacec.ca or by contacting the MCEC Treasurer Georgina Dyck-Hacault at [georgina.dyck-hacault@srsd.ca](mailto:georgina.dyck-hacault@srsd.ca).

Please send donations to Georgina Dyck-Hacault at PO Box 43035, 74-1555 Regent Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, R2C 4J2.

Thank you for supporting MCEC.