

**Arts4All Florida  
Student of the Month  
May, 2020**



**Gage Barker** was nominated by his art teacher, Marsha Rockhill at St. Andrew School in Panama City, Florida. Ms. Rockhill writes, “[Gage’s] relationship with art captures his feelings and makes a magical expression of what he is looking at, from life or from his imagination.”

Gage is an activist for endangered species and shares his beliefs through his artwork. This year, St. Andrew’s school partnered with Panama City’s local Audubon Society to learn about the rebirth of the Gorongosa National Park in Mozambique, Africa after years of destruction. Gage, along with his classmates, worked to create poignant pieces of art that speak to this important cause. Additionally, one of Gage’s pieces of artwork of a shark was chosen to be part of the show *Creating Connections* at the Florida Capitol. Not only did this build this young artist’s confidence but helped him to focus on being an artist with a cause for the environment.

As Gage’s music and art teacher, Ms. Rockhill understands the challenges students such as Gage have with emotional behavioral issues. “Our students need an educational environment that promotes academic achievement while working on each student’s ability to improve their own challenges”. This is exactly what she observed in Gage as he excelled in all subject areas.

As most Floridians know, students and their families in Bay County are still living with the ravages of Hurricane Michael to this day. Gage’s art has allowed him to stay focused and share his talents with others. “His love of sharing art’s joy and healing power allows others to be comforted and inspired to use art as a therapy to overcome their experience and fear of storms.” writes Ms. Rockhill.

Outside of art, Gage is actively involved with SWAT, Students Working Against Tobacco at St. Andrews.



**Levi Vickers** was nominated by Robin Fennema, an administrator with the Tallahassee Youth Orchestra in Leon County, Florida for his outstanding musicianship, leadership and pure tenacity to rise above what seemed overwhelming odds.

Levi has always had music in his heart and soul, but it wasn't until 3 years ago when his many hours of practice began to help shape the accomplished musician he is today as he graduates from high school and relocates to Tampa shortly to attend the University of South Florida seeking a degree in music performance. Levi's primary instrument is the tuba and he's racked up a laundry list of notable awards including 1<sup>st</sup> chair tuba in the FMEA All-State Honor Band and the All-District Band in 2020. Levi participated in his school's marching band and took home the coveted John Philip Sousa Award for leadership, determination, skill and musical promise and has served as an example and mentor to many.

Levi was only recently diagnosed with bipolar disorder, ADHD and PTSD and Ms. Fennema shares that Levi "describes his life journey as holding onto the idea that he was capable of achieving far more than his grades and test scores seemed to indicate". Levi has finally received the tools and support necessary to make that happen and she is excited to see how much more he will accomplish.

Music along with Levi's many challenges, have significantly contributed to his development. As a strong leader in band, he learned how to motivate and encourage. High pressure performances have boosted his social confidence and public speaking abilities. And even his disability itself has helped him develop patience with others allowing him to advocate for others.

Levi has served as a reading buddy for younger students, takes his tuba to local gathering spots to encourage children's interest in music and plays with ensembles that visit nursing homes and churches.