

**Arts4All Florida
Student of the Month
September 2019**



12-year-old **Matthew Smith** attends Varsity Lakes Middle School in Lehigh Acres and was nominated by Michelle Smith, his mother and no doubt, his greatest advocate for his dedication and love for music. She writes, "Matthew has always shown a love for music and has taken the opportunity to learn to bugle on his own." For two years Matthew has successfully accepted the leadership role as his Boy Scout troop's "bugler".

Matthew is a member of his middle school band playing the trumpet, although he now aspires to join the JROTC program at school to continue his bugling service. As a very active member and a LIFE ranked Boy Scout, Matthew continues to gain leadership experience and inspire fellow scouts to follow his example, learn to play the trumpet, and share his love for music.

In addition to playing the trumpet, Matthew has taken piano lessons for 2 years and recently began learning to play the guitar and joined the Guitar Club at school. Although he has ADHD and some cognitive delays, Matthew continues to channel himself toward community service. He volunteers for Benches for Babes and organizes community clean-up efforts. He volunteers for school events to help with parking, guiding parents and students on tours and promoting school activities. He is a Den Chief for a local Cub Scout pack once a week, as well.



18-year-old **Ryan Sleboda** was nominated by Evan Starcher, the Dean of Students and instructor at Pace Brantley School in Longwood, Florida for his outstanding work in TV Productions as well as a host of other arts-based accolades. Mr. Starcher writes, "Ryan has not only created the project on the *History of Pace Brantley*, but he also serves as our lead anchor on our daily morning announcements. He has created numerous visually appealing segments for the program that are shared with the students and staff daily. His technical skills with the programs that we use in TV Productions are a true work of art."

The *History of Pace Brantley*, was written, directed, filmed and narrated by Ryan and is an in-depth documentary about his school, why it was created and the potential future for this iconic educational site for students with specific learning disabilities to learn and develop. "His finished product and dedication to the artistic process is well deserving of recognition beyond the classroom", Mr. Starcher explicates.

Ryan is a senior at Pace Brantley School where he is Senior Class President, enjoys his academics and maintains high grades, friendships and participates in the Running Club. He volunteers, advocates and has presented to his brother's Boy Scout troop about autism and share what it's like to live with a disability, as part of a merit badge program.

Ryan was also nominated by Andrea Piazza, choreographer and dancer for Chance2Dance, a special needs program in Central Florida. Ryan has been dancing with the Chance2Dance Performance Team for two years and they recently completed an outstanding music video in which he was the title character, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4MFI3A7Wlq>. "Ryan is an exceptionally talented young man who works to promote the success of people with disabilities", Piazza shares, "[He] took the initiative to learn ways of communicating with his dance partner with hearing loss so that they could work better together."

In 2019, Ryan held internships at the Central Florida Zoo and Pet Alliance through Vocational Rehabilitation, with a career goal of working with animals. He hopes to attend Beacon College in the fall of 2020 to seek a degree in Anthrozoology, the study of human and animal relationships