

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



11-year-old **Brian McCallum** was nominated by Laura Wells, his music teacher at Zolfo Springs Elementary School in Zolfo Springs, Florida.

Brian is overwhelmingly qualified to be selected as an Arts4All Student of the Month, Ms. Wells shares, “because his love of the arts inspires him to overcome his limitations and to really dig into what he enjoys.” As a first year member of the school’s Music Club, Brian participates in productions and talent shows, and contributes a remarkable amount of time honing his percussion skills, memorizing his parts skillfully to keep the rhythm going. He embraces his love for acting out parts, which he does without hesitation, even though he exhibits inherent difficulties with communication and relating to others in his everyday life as a student with autism. In fact, many times Brian outperforms his neuro-typical peers on the stage!

“I am so proud and happy to see the way [Brian] just comes alive when acting out a part,” writes Ms. Wells. “He has a flair for adding in the dramatic touches at just the right moment.” In addition to his love of music and performance, Brian

participates in food bank collections and distribution as well as group mural painting, beautifying his school walls.



21-year-old **Fernando Pineiro** was enthusiastically nominated by Zanita Hendry, his art teacher at Hillcrest School for Exceptional Students in Ocala, Florida with additional high accolades written by several other teachers that have worked with Fernando during his transitional years.

Fernando is an outstanding example of how a “village” of academic professionals can support a student’s passion within an environment designed for success, both socially and creatively. Ms. Hendry writes, “Fernando is one of those student you never forget. His amazing smile, kind disposition and love of art are simply infectious.” With many art exhibitions with resulting ribbons in his possession, it’s obvious Fernando’s art speaks for itself.

Music teacher, Juan Fuentes weighed in by sharing his experiences with Fernando throughout the three years the school’s music program has been in place. As an exemplary student, Fernando is the first student to perform a solo at the Hillcrest Award Ceremony for students and parents. Because of Fernando’s passion for Disney’s, *The Lion King*, he sang Elton John’s, *Circle of Life*.

Bonus tributes came from Tracy Bravo, Fernando’s work/study teacher and Jackie Weeks, Daniel Bryant and Kathy Devenuto, vocational paraprofessionals, all sharing similar praise for Fernando’s attention to detail and spin on creativity in everything he does. This young man with autism is undoubtedly prepared to take his conscientious, professional work ethic into the labor force and continue to incorporate his innate creative talents into everything he does.