

Arts4All Florida Student of the Month
February 2019



12-year-old **Marcos DelCastillo** was nominated by Scott Courtney, Marco's music teacher at Punta Gorda Middle School in Punta Gorda, Florida. In his recent nomination, Mr. Courtney explains how a young student with autism blossoms in his music class and now performs in the top 7th/8th grade ensemble playing the tuba.

Marcos discovered the trombone in 6th grade, and after demonstrating his potentially perfect pitch and musical talents, was offered the opportunity to play the tuba. Now, as a part of the tuba section in the school's top band, he has become part of "a foundation for the team to build upon and trust", writes Mr. Courtney. "For one of the first times in his life, he is part of a team of great peers that see him as just another band person. He is not treated differently, autism is not discussed. Instead, Marcos is just free to be another band member that is very good on his instrument."

With a significant foundation to build upon and the support of an outstanding and understanding music teacher, Marcos is well on his way to enjoying music-making as part of his life and reaping the rewards of increasing his social interactions in the school setting.



17-year-old **Jade Marks** was nominated by Emily Cipolla, his teacher at Lakewood High School, St. Petersburg, FL. She writes, "Jade is one of the most creative and articulate students we have ever seen at Lakewood High School. His mind is filled with creative ideas and thoughts and how he expresses himself on paper is heartfelt and imaginative. He is a true artist with his pen and paper."

Jade is a staff writer and photographer for the Lakewood High School newspaper and an integral part of the school's journalism program. As a young man with autism, he may struggle to express his thoughts and feelings verbally, however through his writings he connects to his audience, sharing his voice in his own unique way. His talent for developing a story on paper exemplifies his passion and what ultimately sets him apart from most young writers.