

Arts4All Florida
Student of the Month
March 2019



8-year-old **Jake Hunt** was nominated by Mr. Chancery, his classroom teacher at South Ocala Elementary School in Ocala, Florida.

Described by Mr. Chancery as a student who “comes alive” when you place art supplies in his hands, Jake shares his artistic joy with everyone he can. Until recently, due to Jake’s lack of language development and limited communication skills, he was thought to be deaf or hard of hearing. Through further evaluation, his auditory processing concerns are being tackled with not only advanced electronic technology, but good old fashioned art-making.

Mr. Chancery writes, “Jake truly uses his art as an expressive communication tool!” His artistic talents have enabled instructors to better understand the level of content he has learned and processed about the world around him.

Jake has graduated from many self-contained classrooms to enjoying mainstreamed Science classes, an area he loves exploring.

“I just continue to be impressed with Jake’s enthusiasm for learning, his artistic abilities, and his eagerness to help others. He has overcome many adversities and continues to surprise me with his tenacity”, writes ESE Specialist for Curriculum in Marion County, Kathleen Ruiz. “He may have difficulty communicating with words but his art work speaks volumes!!”



19-year-old **Kyle Romero** was nominated by Dina Casabianca, a classroom teacher for the Eau Gallie High School B.L.A.S.T. program. This enterprise-based program meets the needs of Exceptional Education Students (ESE) who are 18-22 years old in Brevard County. It focuses directly on transition opportunities and postsecondary goals of students who have deferred their diploma. Ms. Casabianca shares, in her recent nomination, the story of a student who began the school year in the shadows. Now, she writes, “[Kyle has] started to blossom, communicating more and advocating for himself. [He’s] more independent and has found an activity that he really enjoys and asks for. Art has opened a whole new world for Kyle.”

It all began with his introduction to pottery-making which encouraged Kyle to use his hands in an effort to work through his tactile defensiveness. The school provided this non-verbal young man with autism, an iPad to serve as a communication device, however Kyle’s motor skills were limited, especially to touching the icons on the screen. Working with staff member, Kim Church, Kyle became involved in all aspects of pottery making; rolling out clay, cutting, shaping and then glazing it, producing products that could be sold. The results are nothing short of amazing. Kyle now uses the iPad to communicate and interact with friends and has become notably more outgoing and engaged in social activities with his peers. Pottery has served not only as a creative outlet for Kyle, but a means to develop so many other life skills.

Kyle participates in the Eau Gallie High School enterprise, CraftBLAST, works at the school food pantry, media center and in the cafeteria. He belongs to a social group for students that use communication devices and enjoys time with his family and twin brother.