

For Immediate Release

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## **Princeton Junction Teen to Receive Award for Students with Disabilities**

**ARLINGTON, VA, March 22, 2013**—Brian Meersma, 17, is a strong advocate for himself and others with disabilities who benefit from the use of technology. Because of his achievements, Brian will receive a 2013 Yes I Can! Award from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) at the Yes I Can! Award Ceremony on Friday, April 5, at the Grand Hyatt in San Antonio, as part of the CEC 2013 Convention & Expo.

CEC is an international membership organization composed of special and gifted education professionals who work to improve the quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities and their families through professional excellence and advocacy.

Each year, the Yes I Can! program recognizes the accomplishments of 21 students. Awards are given in seven categories: academics, arts, athletics, school and community activities, self-advocacy, technology, and transition. CEC is proud to honor Brian with this award in the self-advocacy category.

“The Yes I Can! Awards were developed to recognize the accomplishments of students with disabilities who have achieved remarkable things,” says CEC President Christy A. Chambers. “Brian is most deserving of this award for his hard work and perseverance.”

Brian has been an active advocate and member of his community since he was 6 years old. At 11, he won a Governor’s Environmental Excellence Award, was issued a proclamation by his town and received a personal letter from former President Clinton expressing his admiration for Brian’s involvement in his community. Brian also travels annually to Capitol Hill to garner support for the gifted and special education issues.

Brian, who has dyslexia, said, “I do almost all of my reading with text to speech software and all my writing on the computer. I don’t focus on my disability. I just think that I read and write in ways that are different from my classmates. I have cousins who are blind and they read using their fingers to feel the letters on the page. Most of my friends and family read using their eyes. I read using both my eyes and ears. The way I think about it, we all just have different ways of getting information.”

Brian not only advocates for education issues, but shares his passion for assistive technology so others may benefit from his knowledge. He actively maintains a blog and gives presentations and workshops on assistive technology, is a member of Bookshare’s advisory board, as the only high school student member and has run a summer reading group for struggling readers.

“I am in awe of Brian. He does it as service to other students with dyslexia and reading disabilities so they won’t have to struggle or be labeled as different and so they can achieve in life and school,” Maureen Terebey, one of Brian’s nominators. “My own child has dyslexia and has denied his disability because he didn’t want to be different. Brian took his difference and made a difference.”

For more information about CEC’s annual convention, please visit [www.cec.sped.org/convention](http://www.cec.sped.org/convention). For more information about the Yes I Can! Awards, please visit [www.cec.sped.org/yesican](http://www.cec.sped.org/yesican).

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