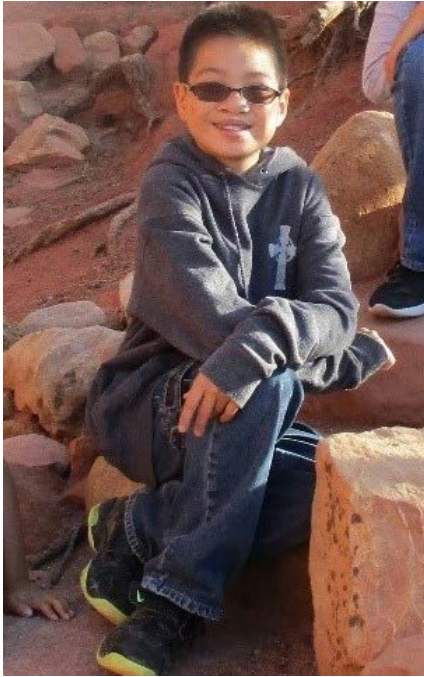


VSA Florida
Student of the Month
September 2017

VSA Florida is proud to announce Jaidon DiBiasio-Kaplan and Lucas Mann as the September 2017 Students of the Month.



12-year-old Jaidon DiBiasio-Kaplan was nominated by his mother, Melissa DiBiasio. Jaidon excels in creative writing and music at Diplomat Middle School in North Fort Myers. Quinn Schnabel, Jaidon's creative writing teacher writes, "Jaidon shares his writing and ideas with the class on a regular basis. He works well with his peers and gives them great suggestions for improving their writing." Jaidon's nomination included an extraordinary biographical essay entitled "The Great Veronica Shoemaker." In it, he paid homage to the influential human rights activist, Veronica Shoemaker, who lived and worked throughout Lee County fighting for equality for all people. Perfectly annotated, Jaidon succinctly wrote and exemplified his deep understanding and concern for civil liberties. Jaidon was adopted from China in 2007, and although born with a cleft palate, his mother writes, "He has persevered in learning to play the saxophone. He is also hearing impaired and wears hearing aids. He has never let his disability stand in the way with accomplishing his goals."



18-year-old Lucas Mann was nominated by Janice Celeste, TV Production Teacher at Flagler Palm Coast High School in Palm Coast. Ms. Celeste writes, "[Lucas] is a sports announcer and camera person. He doesn't let anything stop him. He has cerebral palsy but palsy doesn't have him." Having the gift to store hundreds of fun sports facts in his head, Lucas hosts a weekly broadcast of his school television series, *Sports Trivia with Lucas Mann* that airs on location, either from the school football field or in the gym. Mrs. Celeste expounds, "His personality shines through everything he

does and all of the student body knows him. He's a bit of a celebrity through FPC-TV News. I have a feeling he would be famous without the news, as well." As a member of the TV Club,

Lucas volunteers to film extracurricular events at the school, including football games and pep rallies. He participates in Special Olympics and competes in the 50-meter swim. By making physical filming accommodations available through innovative techniques to this extraordinary young man, Mrs. Celeste has been able to reap the rewards of teaching success. She has noted a surge in Lucas' self-confidence over the past couple of years and writes, "His pride radiates through his big smile. He always amazes me."

In the coming weeks, VSA Florida is looking forward to presenting Jaidon and Lucas with their gift certificates and personalized trophies for winning this prestigious award.

The VSA Florida Student of the Month Program is designed to increase public awareness and recognize the impact arts make on students with disabilities statewide. Students who participate in the arts develop creativity, have increased self-confidence, understand teamwork, have increased language and math skills and are generally more engaged.