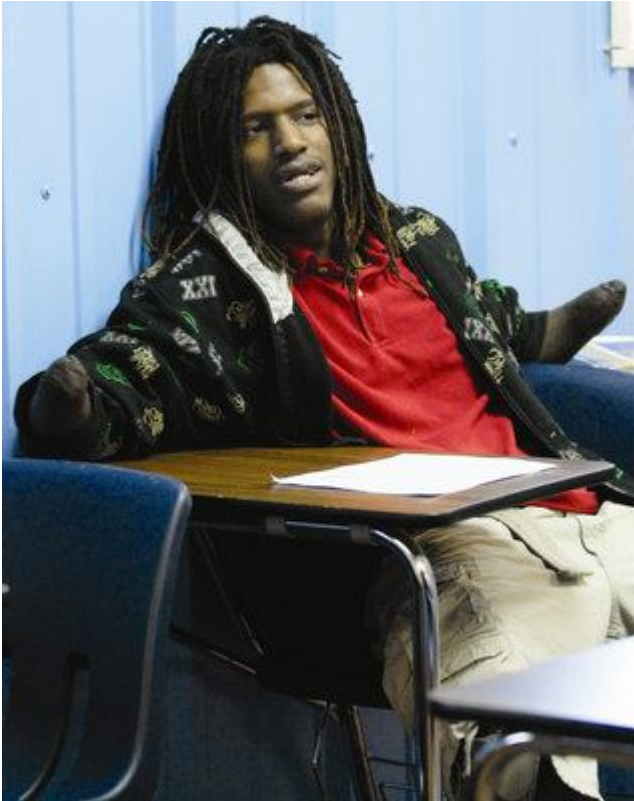


Amputee Honored For Indomitable Spirit

by Kristal Dixon

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Furtah Preparatory School senior James Don Adams, 17, son of James and Lamona Adams of Acworth, talks about current events in class at the southwest Cherokee County school on Wednesday morning. James, a quadruple amputee, has won the international honor of a Yes I Can! Award from the Council for Exceptional Children. Photo by Samantha Wilson

A Cherokee County student is being recognized on the international level for not letting his disability keep him from living out his dreams.

James Don Adams, a senior at Furtah Preparatory School in southwest Cherokee, has won the Yes I Can! Award from the Council for Exceptional Children.

A quadruple amputee, James, 17, son of James and Lamona Adams of Acworth, will be recognized at the council's 2010 Convention and Expo on April 23 in Nashville, Tenn.

The Georgia Federation Council for Exceptional Children honored James today at its conference in Athens.

"I'm happy to be getting it," James said. "I was very surprised when I found out about it."

The Georgia federation awarded James \$500 to use toward traveling expenses to the national convention.

He was nominated for the award by Furtah Prep Headmaster Fred Furtah.

Furtah said he was impressed with James's story and his determination to not let his disability limit his potential.

"He's overcome tremendous odds," Furtah said. "He never makes for excuses for anything, and I want that to be a lesson to other kids."

The council is an international professional organization that works to improve the educational success for children with disabilities.

The Yes I Can! Award, which has honored more than 30,000 children since its inception in 1982, recognizes 27 children in nine categories who have excelled despite their disability each year.

The categories are academics, arts, athletics, community service, employment, extracurricular activities, independent living skills, self-advocacy and technology.

James, who was selected for his success in athletics, has "been an inspiration to everyone," said Anna Baker, who coordinates the council's awards program.

Ms. Baker said the council receives hundreds of nominations from around the world, and they are reviewed by a team of "distinguished" special education teachers.

"We look for really impressive stories and accomplishments, and James really exemplifies that Yes I Can! spirit," Ms. Baker said.

Only two other Georgia teens have won the honor. Darius Weems of Athens was recognized in 2009 for the self-advocacy category, and Monroe resident Samantha Simonton won for academics in 2008.

James was diagnosed with meningococcal meningitis at three months old. The disease is a bacterial form of meningitis, an infection of the thin lining surrounding the brain and spinal cord.

His condition became life-threatening. When he was five months old, doctors eventually amputated all four of his limbs because of the lack of blood flow to them, Mrs. Adams said.

Mrs. Adams said the lack of full limbs hasn't affected her son one bit.

She and her family, Mrs. Adams said, did not raise James to have self-pity.

"It was just something... we don't dwell in," she said. "You've got to have a healthy mind when a tragedy happens to your family."

She said James was treated in the same manner as their older daughter, noting he also was expected to help with chores around the house.

James, who sometimes wears prosthetics on his legs, said he's able to do everything other teenagers can do.

He plays basketball with the Georgia Blazers wheelchair basketball team and participates in The Shepherd Center's wheelchair basketball team.

And he's participated in the Wheelchair Division of the Peachtree Road Race.

At Furtah, he's also a member of the Beta Club.

James said he would like attend college after graduating.

He's applied to the University of Alabama to play on its men's wheelchair basketball team. He would like to major in engineering and make prosthetic legs.

James said he hopes other students keep their dreams alive and don't let any obstacles get in their way.

"Nothing can hold you back," he said.

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