

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM THROUGH EXERCISE

MEET THE EC CHAMPIONS



RACHEL

At 18 months old, Rachel lost her ability to speak and was diagnosed with autism. Who knew that she would now be presenting across the country sharing her story. Rachel doesn't remember too much growing up, but she will tell you that movement played an important part in her physical and cognitive development. At 14 years old, she was reluctant to exercise and when she did, would only wear her school uniform and slip-on shoes. Her dog, Fleur, was her motivator to exercise and today is still a part of her workouts. Now, 18 years old, Rachel is dressed in exercise gear with newfound hope and optimism. She recently graduated from high school and is excited to see what the next four years can bring.

ANTHONY

Flexing and exercising his muscles was not Anthony's first choice, but because he routinely saw his Dad exercising he was willing to give it a try. Anthony began working out in his basement at 13 years old, ten years after being diagnosed with autism. It was a challenge to make it a part of his routine, but experiencing gains in his muscular strength kept him curious for more. His love of Batman and superheroes is what kept him motivated and the occasional comic book at the end of the session from Coach Dave. Today, 17 years old, Anthony uses his strength at his first job at Mariano's. You can also catch him on the Coach Dave Show and at autism conferences, selling products for the EC and talking with others about the benefits of exercise.



ROAN

Don't let Roan's size fool you, pound-for-pound, he EC's strongest Champion. But it didn't start that way. Roan, diagnosed with autism at age 2, had difficulty maintaining eye-contact, slow language development and had many gut issues. He was introduced to exercise at 3.5 years old where yoga was instrumental towards getting him engaged. The animal positions he was putting his body into helped him connect with the animal identification he was learning in school. Now at 7 years old, exercise is a part of his weekly routine. He not only lifts 2 pound dumbbells, but can maintain a Elbows 'n' Toes (plank) position better than kids twice his age. He is smart, has no trouble talking and may be the next Ryan Seacrest.



BRODY

With a smile always so big, we wish this picture could share his adorable laugh. Brody, diagnosed with autism at age 2, has a passion for libraries and movies. He began exercising at 9 years old because his Mom thought “outside-the-box”. She knew PT and OT often end and wanted Brody to have an active lifestyle and adulthood. Now, at 12 years old, Brody thrives using the Visual Exercise System. He can perform multiple exercises quicker than most adults. He is always up for the challenge and we can’t wait to see what else he will accomplish in and out of the exercise environment.

NOEL

Basketball is Noel’s passion although so is getting a paycheck. Noel, who is non-verbal and diagnosed with autism, has remained active since he was young. Along with basketball, you can catch him swimming laps and even lifting weights. He became a part of the EC because he wanted to work and like many of our Champions never got the opportunity. Noel has been instrumental in building Visual Exercise Systems for schools and organizations. You can also catch him on the Coach Dave Show teaching basketball. While a paycheck is always welcome, he has a big heart, and also volunteers at We Grow Dreams. There, he is responsible for planting, transporting materials and cleaning.



BILL

At 25 years old, Bill had difficulty catching a baseball. Having played softball for the last four summers this was unacceptable for Coach Dave. Diagnosed with Asperger syndrome and suffering from seizures, professionals and coaches may have been timid to challenge him. Well, challenge was exactly what he needed. Through exercise, Bill has not only increased his muscular strength and coordination, but can now catch two balls while balancing on a stability ball! Something most high-level athletes can’t do. Bill, a die-hard Cubs fan, is an inspiration for many adults because of his “never give up” attitude. Bill is a graduate of Elgin Community College and has been working at Meijer’s for the last four years.