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2013 Advocates in Disability Award Winner Announced

Student chemist honored for opening doors and eyes for future scientists

Washington, D.C. (June 6, 2013) – The HSC Foundation is pleased to announce that Henry Wedler is the 2013 recipient of its Advocates in Disability Award. Mr. Wedler, 26, has been a strong advocate for people with disabilities, particularly individuals with visual impairments who have an interest in science.

Born blind and originally discouraged from pursuing a career in chemistry, Mr. Wedler's passion for the scientific field became limitless after his own revelation and challenge to a teacher that no one, not even his sighted peers, can see atoms. Today, Mr. Wedler is a graduate student at the University of California, Davis, where he studies computational organic chemistry. He is also the founder of [Accessible Science](#), a nonprofit organization that works to teach blind and visually impaired students that they can succeed at scientific careers through an annual "Chemistry Camp."

In its seventh year, the Advocates in Disability Award program honors an individual between the ages of 14 and 26 who is dedicated to positively affecting the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. The award is open to applicants from across the United States, and made possible by The HSC Foundation and Sarah Beth Coyote Foundation. [The HSC Foundation](#) is the parent organization of The HSC Health Care System.

Mr. Wedler will receive \$3,000 for his advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities, and an additional \$7,000 towards a project to benefit the disability community. Mr. Wedler plans to use the \$7,000 for the camp he organizes, which uses organic chemistry to show students that eyesight is not required to study seemingly visual subjects. Due to his interest in science, he founded the camp in 2011 and serves as the primary organizer as well as one of its instructors.

"I believe this camp is incredibly enriching and leaves the blind and visually impaired teenage campers with a strong feeling of empowerment. It teaches them the joy of feeling independent and provides them with valuable skills to use in science applications at high school and college," said Henry Wedler, 2013 Advocates in Disability Award recipient. "This funding will greatly improve the overall experience of campers."

Originally from Petaluma, Calif., Mr. Wedler remembers always having a fascination for science and how things work. He credits his parents with having high expectations for him and pushing him to think critically.

"Henry is truly an exceptional individual," said Thomas W. Chapman, EdD, MPH, president and CEO of The HSC Foundation. "He is a strong role model for disability advocates and we thank him for what he is doing on behalf of the disability community."



Past Advocates in Disability Award winners have achieved a variety of accomplishments, from establishing a new contest to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, to eliminating outdated and stigmatizing language from Virginia state code. Ari Ne'eman, a winner from 2008 who founded a nonprofit organization to advance the principles of the disability rights movement with regard to autism, was appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as a member of the National Council on Disability.

The award program is a project of [The National Youth Transitions Initiative](#), a signature program of The HSC Foundation. The National Youth Transitions Initiative brings together the collective resources of multiple organizations to focus on transitions-related services, research, public policy, best practices and innovative projects.

Overall, the Initiative's goal is to strengthen transition services, helping young people and young veterans with disabilities build paths to independence, and its physical building serves as a hub for regional and national disability organizations, policymakers, government agencies and disability advocates. To learn more about The National Youth Transitions Center, visit www.thenytc.org or follow it on Twitter at [@The_NYTC](#) or Facebook at www.facebook.com/thenytc.

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About The HSC Foundation

The HSC Foundation is dedicated to improving access to services for individuals who face social and health care barriers due to disability, chronic illness or other circumstances that present unique needs. Along with supporting operating companies, it places a particular emphasis on transition-age youth and young veterans. To learn more, visit www.hscfoundation.org.

About The HSC Health Care System

The HSC Health Care System is a multi-faceted, nonprofit organization that weaves together a care coordination plan (Health Services for Children with Special Needs, Inc.), pediatric specialty hospital (The HSC Pediatric Center) and home health agency (HSC Home Care, LLC) with its parent organization, The HSC Foundation. The integrated system offers a comprehensive approach to caring, serving and empowering individuals with disabilities and complex health care needs.

