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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Bonaire Middle Student Earns National *Yes I Can!* Award**



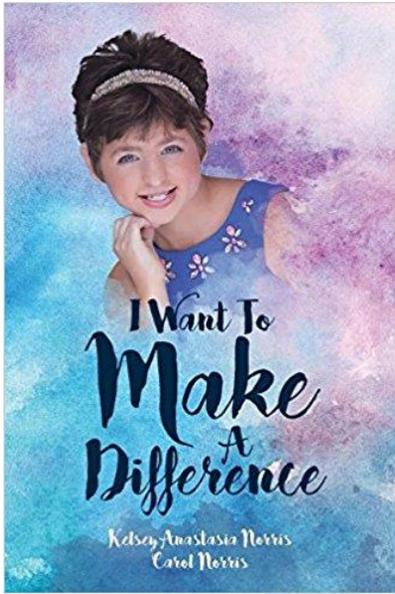
HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – Bonaire Middle School seventh grader Kelsey Norris was one of 12 students from across the country that received the *Yes I Can!* award from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Kelsey received her award at the 2018 Council for Exceptional Children's Convention held Feb. 7 - 10 in Tampa, Fl.

The *Yes I Can!* Awards celebrate the achievements of children and youth with exceptionalities; encourage these individuals to seek their highest potential; and increase public awareness of the abilities, aspirations, and personal qualities of those with disabilities. At the convention, Kelsey was a featured panelist during the Exceptional Lives, Exceptional Stories two-hour workshop. She shared information about her strengths and challenges, what she wished her teachers knew about helping her learn and what motivates her the most.

Kelsey's mother, Carol Norris, said, "We also served on a panel discussion during a workshop for several hundred college students who are majoring in special education. We talked about Kelsey's educational journey and our experience working with school team members. I told them that Kelsey's current school was the gold standard for how special education students should be treated and included in the larger school community. I also said that her special education teachers starting with Mrs. Rachel Jenkins (in first and second grade) and Mr. Joshua Hirsch (in 6th and 7th grades) were some of finest individuals we have ever met. I told the students that they will have a tremendous positive impact on their students and their families."

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Kelsey has co-authored and published a book titled, "I Want To Make a Difference," with her mom. It may be purchased online at [Amazon](#), Barnes and Noble and Books-A-Million websites. Currently Kelsey's book is number 39 on the Amazon Children's Inspirational Books Best Seller List.

Kelsey has an amazing story. At 11 months of age, she was adopted by her mom from an orphanage in Russia, and the doctors thought she might never walk. At the young age of 13, she has earned more than 2,500 community service hours and raised more than \$30,000 for charities. Last year, she was named one of Georgia's top two youth volunteers for the 2017 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

The Georgia CEC is part of an international community of professionals who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC's mission is to improve, through excellence and advocacy, the education and quality of life for children and youth with exceptionalities and to enhance the engagement of their families.

Bonaire Middle School is located at 125 Highway 96 East in Bonaire. Principal Cindy Randall may be reached at 478-929-6235. Learn more about Kelsey from this [Atlanta Journal Constitution article](#).

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