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College of Education student receives state award

JULY 5, 2018

Bailey Waters, a senior majoring in special education, received the Outstanding Student Member award from the Georgia Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) during its annual IDEAS Conference, held June 5-8 on St. Simons Island.

"When my picture flashed up on the screen, I couldn't believe it," Waters said. "Everyone was so excited. It was great."

Recognized as an undergraduate student who has made outstanding contributions in service to the CEC and to children with exceptionalities, Waters received a commemorative sculpture and will be a nominee for the CEC's national student award.

Waters is the current president of the Georgia Southern University chapter of Student Council for Exceptional Children (SCEC).

"We advocate for people with special needs out in the community," Waters said of the SCEC. "To be a leader in the organization helps me have a voice and make a difference for these students. It's so much bigger than just the special olympics. It's a national effort as well to pass laws that help these individuals have equal opportunities and affordances in life."

Waters' passion can also be seen in her volunteer work outside of the University and SCEC. Last spring, Waters taught dance to students with disabilities at Mattie Lively Elementary School. Serving 15 students each week, she worked with the students to teach motor skills and basic movements by dancing to "Can't Stop the Feeling" by Justin Timberlake. She also worked with students individually to create solo and group numbers. The dance class ended with a recital in May where the students performed their choreographed numbers.

"It was so much fun to be a part of," Waters said. "I took dance for 10 years and cheered for 10 years, but my knowledge and understanding of the students' characteristics and how to work with them helped me the most."

A native of Tattnall County, Waters said she knew she wanted to be a teacher from a young age.

"My high school was really inclusive, and I was involved with the special education students in my classes," she said. "I am really passionate about it."



Bailey Waters

Waters will graduate in spring 2019 and plans to return to Tattnall County to work with elementary school special education.

"So many students with disabilities are told that they are incapable or unable, but they aren't," Waters said. "Our job is to show them they can. I want to start working with the younger students and bring the fun to the classroom to show them their full capabilities."