



About Tyler Greene ... Tyler is probably best known for his outgoing, warm demeanor. Everyone was his friend and few ever saw him without a smile on his face. It was said that there were no strangers in Tyler's life, only friends he had not yet met. He was always happy to see you, as evidenced by his signature smile and wave, and always had time for a chat. He sincerely cared about you and your life and was eager to tell you about his nephews and niece and godson. He tended to make an immediate, positive impression on people that was not easily forgotten. Tyler survived a traumatic birth on February 7, 1990 after which he spent his first six weeks of life receiving wonderful care at the Neonatal ICU at the University of Iowa Hospitals. Tyler fully accepted and wholeheartedly embraced his cerebral palsy and other disabilities. It was simply who he was ... he had no regrets. Despite being told what he would NOT be able

to do, Tyler spent a lifetime of Doing. He started advocating for people with disabilities when he was eight years old speaking to education classes at the University of Northern Iowa with his mother, Gina. Rather than complain about his own disabilities, he was a staunch advocate for anyone and everyone marginalized by our world today including folks with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and racial, ethnic, and religious minorities.

Tyler graduated from West Waterloo High School in 2008. He earned an Associate Degree at Hawkeye Community College and continued his education at the University of Northern Iowa earning a bachelor's degree in Sociology. Tyler was involved in life in every way. He loved music of all kinds. He loved being a gamer. He was a movie buff extraordinaire. He was the person you wanted on your trivia team. Among the many activities Tyler enjoyed were playing softball in his wheelchair, doing karate on his knees, and being in the water which he loved, though he sank like a rock. Through his life, Tyler taught others there is always a way to overcome any obstacles we may face. He reminded us that "can't" is not a useful word and wasn't allowed in our family. His Eagle Scout project was creating a short, educational DVD about Ability Awareness. The DVD "I'm Tyler ... don't be surprised" was distributed to all school districts in Iowa for training of educators and administrators. It is still offered for free on his website www.ImTyler.org. Over 13,000 DVDs have been requested from all 50 states and 29 countries to-date. By the most conservative estimates, well over a million people around the world have learned about Ability Awareness through Tyler. And, happily, it continues yet today.

Tyler was asked to provide keynote presentations at several dozen local, regional, and national conferences across the country. Audiences from 100 to 1,800 were inspired by Tyler's message of Ability Awareness. *"Ability Awareness is simply the skill of recognizing that what someone CAN do is much more important than what they can't do."* Those audiences included the Joint Commission of the Navy-Air Force in Dallas, Kids Included Together (KIT) in San Diego, the National Synod of the UCC in Hartford, the Dept of Defense and FDA in Chicago and so many others. Audiences thoroughly enjoyed Tyler's humor and easy way of delivering important life lessons about Inclusion and Ability Awareness. The young man speaking to them quickly morphed from a "poor, tragic soul in a wheelchair" to a fun, yet very credible, advocate for folks with disabilities. They laughed and learned with Tyler and soon didn't notice the wheelchair, just the wonderful smile.

In 2008 the US Congress held a reception in Tyler's honor and to celebrate the 18th birthday of the Americans with Disabilities Act where he was asked to speak on Ability Awareness, the only audience that made him nervous. :) Tyler was selected to participate in a collaboration of teenagers in Washington DC who created the national "I Am Norm" campaign. "I Am Norm" promoted the concept that we are all "normal" ... we are who we are, something Tyler believed wholeheartedly. Tyler also served on a national committee, Kids As Self Advocates (KASA), who discussed issues and created supporting documents concerning people with disabilities. Tyler was a member of several other local and state committees and councils. Because of his tenure on the State of Iowa Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), he was asked to review and offer edits for the hefty State of Iowa manual for paraeducator standards.

Tyler received many awards for his efforts and for simply being "Tyler". He appreciated the awards mostly as recognition that his message was deemed important, but also for the opportunity of another platform to share the meaning of Ability Awareness. Among the awards were the United Church of Christ "National Disabilities Ministries" award and the "Yes, I Can" award for advocacy bestowed by the National Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Senator Ted Kennedy also received a "Yes, I Can" award the same evening. The Iowa chapter of CASE (Council for Administrators of Special Education) started awarding an annual "Tyler Achievement Scholarship" the same year. It continues to honor achieving seniors every year.

Tyler was the inclusion coordinator for Together We Play, a part of the Inclusion Connection in the Cedar Valley. In that role he partnered with organizations in Iowa to help them create more inclusive programming and activities. Tyler was an active member of First Congregational UCC of Waterloo and Threehouse Collaborative Campus Ministries at UNI. He believed we are all made in God's image ... everyone.

But mostly, Tyler was simply full of love and compassion for others, especially those often trivialized by our society. People seldom forgot their encounters with Tyler and remember him with a smile. Everywhere our family went, someone knew Tyler. Tyler loved his whole family deeply, especially his nephews, Wesley & Zachary, his niece, Ellison, and his godson, Vincent. Tyler David Greene, 31, of Waterloo, Iowa died November 10, 2021 at the Surgical ICU at the same University of Iowa Hospitals after being struck by an SUV while out in his wheelchair. The outpouring of Love from the world at his death was a testament to the Life he led.

He would want you to Be Kind and Love Others ... please do.

His dream was to change the world. He did. So can you.

Tyler's work and message are being continued in many ways thanks to the caring of so many. Most efforts are funded through the Tyler Greene Fund at the Waterloo Community Foundation.

<https://wloocommunityfoundation.org/tyler-greene-fund/>

Tyler Greene High School Senior Scholarship

UNI Tyler Greene Education Scholarship

Inclusion Connection – Tyler Greene Endowment

Threehouse Campus Ministries - Tyler Greene Speaker Series

Tyler's Inclusion Resource Website – ImTyler.org

