

# Scott Finney TNSTEP Self-Advocate of the Year Award

## Angela Burrows

2025



Angela's journey into advocacy began with her greatest motivation—her child. In 2019, after discovering her child with dyslexia was not receiving the interventions required by Tennessee's "Say Dyslexia" law, Angela stood up and spoke out. What followed was a courageous and deeply personal battle that would change lives far beyond her own family.

Despite being advised to leave her community, Angela stayed—and stepped up. She studied tirelessly, trained in paralegal studies and advocacy programs, and committed herself to supporting families across Tennessee, including right in her hometown of Grundy County. Today, she continues to advocate at no cost to parents, and she now serves on the Grundy County School Board, where she works to build strong bridges between parents, teachers, and students.

One of her nominators wrote:

"Her courage and her strength come from kids just like me... She lights our path fearlessly."

Angela has helped over 150 students gain access to the education they deserve. Her leadership, resilience, and compassion embody the very heart of what the Scott Finney Self-Advocate of the Year Award stands for.

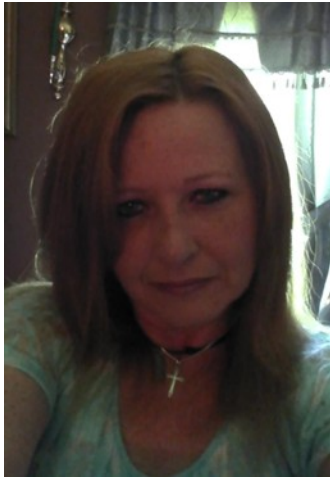
TNSTEP is pleased to bestow the Scott Finney Self-Advocacy of the Year Award to Angela Burrows.



# Scott Finney STEP Self-Advocate of the Year Award

## Tabitha "Tammy" Lents

2022



Tabitha Lents has worked hard to bring awareness to bullying and other rights for students with disabilities. She has developed a social media presence dedicated to this. V.A.B.= Victims Against Bullying and the State of Truth. Both social media pages help inform other children not to feel alone and bring awareness to parents needing information on what's happening in the school or juvenile system.

TNSTEP is pleased to bestow the 2023 Scott Finney Self-Advocacy of the Year Award to Tabitha Lents.



# Scott Finney STEP Self-Advocate of the Year Award

## Scott Kramer

2019



Scott Kramer is an autistic adult who is a very effective and committed self-advocate and advocate. He founded the GCA Centre for Adult Autism, Southeast USA in early 2011. Initially established as a local, adult-only support group for individuals on the spectrum, GCA has expanded to include social support groups from the Tri-Cities area of Northeast Tennessee to the Metro Atlanta, GA area. Despite his own challenges, Scott has enhanced the size and reputation of GCA's Annual Southeast Adult Autism Symposium, which is now in its 3rd very successful year. It features adults with autism as presenters, session facilitators and exhibitors, along with numerous agency and organization representatives who provide services for this population.

Scott's impact on the adult autism community in Tennessee has been significant. With the vast majority of research programs and government services focusing on young children with autism, Scott has highlighted the need for supporting those who are living and working, and trying to live and work, in a society that is often not "autism-friendly". When necessary, Scott has taken his message to state legislators and other policymakers to advocate for more acceptance for adults with autism, and positive change.

We knew when we selected Scott for this award that he was doing all of these wonderful things for our community while simultaneously battling a serious form of cancer. In his forthright way, he shared that reality with us. We're saddened by Scott's death on September 6, 2019 due to that illness, but are inspired to carry on his legacy with the same passion and dedication that he exemplified.



# Scott Finney STEP Self-Advocate of the Year Award

## Scott Finney

2018



STEP is delighted to announce a new opportunity, starting this year, to honor a person who has embodied the positive character traits of being a strong self-advocate by accepting responsibility, speaking up for themselves and others, and above all, leading by example.

The Scott Finney STEP Self-Advocate of the Year Award is named after a man who has dedicated his life to leading by example. Scott Finney has been involved in systems change efforts at every level - local, state, and national. He is a self-advocate with Down syndrome and a proud 1984 high school graduate from Marion Township High School in Williamson County, Illinois. He has worked for The Arc Tennessee since July of 1988 – nearly 30 years – as the Receptionist and Community Liaison. He has also been a dedicated STEP Tennessee Board member since August of 2000. Because of Scott's institutional knowledge of STEP and the history of the disability movement - not to mention his FANTASTIC memory - he serves as the official New Member Mentor of the STEP Board. In this role he acclimates new members to the board and encourages them to fully participate. His enthusiasm is contagious and sets the stage for success!

In addition to his long-term commitments to The Arc and STEP, Scott has led workshops at conferences, collaborated with organizations like People First, the Tennessee Disability Coalition, and the Tennessee Microboard Association, and has been featured on television.

Scott leads by example by choosing causes that he champions carefully and effectively. Once he commits to supporting an endeavor, you can count on him. Because he is truly committed to making the world a better place for individuals with disabilities, he brings new and innovative ideas to the table and is willing to put time and effort into making change happen.

Scott has embodied the tenets of self-advocacy and – through leading by example – has inspired folks to speak up for themselves and live their lives to the fullest. His ongoing involvement with the disability community is a true inspiration to all who interact with him.

STEP is thrilled and proud to present this premiere award, to name it after Scott and his accomplishments, and looks forward to honoring self-advocates who will walk in Scott's shoes in years to come.