Disability advocacy means speaking up for people who can't. It's a chance to give back and show my support for my community. This means standing up for not only what you believe in, but what others who might not be able to project their voice be heard and seen.

For me, the layout change on the second floor near the fishtank was the most meaningful to me. As a child, I spent countless hours in that area and being a part of the layout change felt outstanding.

One big advocacy dream I have is to personally lead younger youth to becoming advocates themselves. I would love to have workshop-led classes to direct youth to becoming advocates for whatever they want to stand up for.

– Aafiya

I feel like advocacy means to me is when you use your voice to speak out against the government who has wronged basic human rights. And you help create an understanding between opposing parties and opposing opinions.

– Alanna

To me, disability advocacy is advocating for the wider disability community. It also includes that people with disabilities get what they need and want in order to live a fulfilling life.

The accomplishment that I am most proud of when it comes to YAC is becoming a better advocate – not only for YAC itself, but for people outside of YAC, as well. I believe my time at YAC has helped me to pursue professional opportunities for advocacy work, but also YAC has been helpful with my ability to feel confident as an advocate.

In the future, I am hoping to do some more work in sexuality and disability, which is the area I am passionate about – not only with advocacy work, but also by educating others.

– Alex

Disability advocacy means making it clear that one can still succeed even with a disability. It can come in many forms, such as making zines, speaking at events, having YAC discussions, and voting on bills and laws. Doing what others say you cannot can be a form of disability advocacy. Competing in an athletic competition or the like can be a form of this for some.

As a YAC member, I am very proud of making a video recording for schools to help with disability accommodations, and also being interviewed on several occasions for news articles. I have met many new people here I am glad to know.

I hope to continue to advocate for autism with YAC and elsewhere after I leave it. I will continue to study at university and look to obtain jobs where I can demonstrate my skills.

– Ethan

To me, disability advocacy means promoting the idea that the thoughts of all individuals should be equally considered regardless of the methods they need to be able to support them in getting these perspectives out in the world. In disability advocacy, we strive to request accessibility in physical, psychological, and social domains to ensure individuals are not restricted.

In YAC, I am most proud of the information sharing to future Youth Advisory Councils with YAC being the standard of how positive healthcare and hospital Youth Advisory Councils can be and what they can mean for people. I am so proud that Holland Bloorview's Youth Advisory Council is an innovator and standard for giving disabled youth a voice and a place for all of us to find community and share our knowledge to help others.

My advocacy dream is that all individuals have a way to participate, learn, and share in education, healthcare, and social activism in whatever ways they need. The goal is for everyone to be able to provide their thoughts with supports, resources, time, and energy to give back and to take it all in that they are able to, and in all of the ways they want to be able to contribute back, as well.

– Jessica

Disability advocacy is my life raft. Without knowing how to advocate for my needs, I wouldn't have gotten anywhere in life. Disability advocacy is survival. It is paving your own way in a world not built with you in mind.

For the future of advocacy, I hope that disabled individuals will be considered in major issues alongside others, instead of as an afterthought.

– Jillian

Disability advocacy is making space for people with disabilities in a society that doesn't give that space.

Being able to use art to build awareness around youth with disabilities, share stories which allows them to have a voice.

Make disability artwork that gets exposure from the general public.

– Lexin

Disability advocacy means harnessing my voice and perspectives to highlight my lived experience and in turn, influence positive change. It means working within a community and striving to not only alter perspectives broadly, but also learn from those within my community.

The goal with my advocacy is to disrupt the status quo perspectives that uphold ableist structures within a society.

I am most proud of building community within YAC and seeing new members flourish and develop their voices. I have also enjoyed and find satisfaction with contributing to the language used across various campaigns. I found my contributions to the sexuality and disability project particularly impactful in addressing a taboo subject that isn't often discussed.

I want to see my advocacy and my work as an OT blend more seamlessly and see how both lived experience and a health care background can contribute to new pathways for my advocacy. I would also like to see the blending of advocacy with other marginalized lived experiences and identities.

– Mikayla

Access to accessibility supports and services.

Advocating for accessibility and supports for people with disabilities.

My dream is to become a role model for other children and youth with disabilities to achieve their goals and dreams, as well.

– Nethulya

Disability advocacy means to use my experience to improve the experiences of others. Advocacy also means speaking up for what I need in order to live day to day. For example, if a door is too heavy and I can't open it or I need furniture to be moved in a room.

One of the accomplishments that I am most proud of is being a part of the door accessibility project. A lot of the doors at the hospital are heavy and I was able to consult on the doors that should have a wave button. And then one of the other accomplishments in general was that I was able to find a community here and learn how to trust my voice.

One of my advocacy dreams is to continue to use my voice and tell my stories in ways that can help others. I'm interested in – if I can find ways to teach others about how to treat people with disabilities.

– Sam