

## The Jeannie Amendola Speech & Research Competition

The Able Trust saw a need for a new initiative that would help stress the importance and develop of verbal communication and research skills for high school students with disabilities in an era dominated by digital communications.

The Jeannie Amendola Speech & Research Competition was created so students of The Able Trust's High School High Tech Program (HSHT) could learn how to research and deliver a presentation on a topic. The goal is to give students with disabilities skills that will benefit them as they begin to prepare to enter post-secondary education or the workforce.

As a statewide competition, participants first compete on the local level and have the opportunity to move on to regionals, and then the state finals. The Board of Directors of The Able Trust serve as the judges of the state finals. With 12 participants at the first event in 2016, the Jeannie Amendola Speech & Research Competition is growing with 30 participants in 2019.



*Edward Grillo*  
Winner, 2018 Jeannie Amendola  
Speech & Research Competition

## Honoring Jeannie Amendola



*Jeannie Amendola*

The Able Trust is honored to name the Speech & Research Competition as the Jeannie Amendola Speech & Research Competition in memory of Jeannie Amendola who passed away on December 28, 2017. Jeannie, a longtime Disney employee, was a passionate advocate for the inclusion of people with disabilities. She served as a leader with CastABLE, the Disney diversity resource group that promotes respect, equality, and appreciation of people with disabilities through awareness, education, and inclusion. Amendola also served on the Board of The Able Trust for 12 years and as an Ambassador for The Able Trust until she passed away.

With a disability herself, Jeannie was legally blind, she was always humorous and to-the-point, engaging audiences wherever she spoke on behalf of The Able Trust. Jeannie was a tireless advocate who spoke out for those with disabilities and naming the Speech & Research Competition after her allows The Able Trust to carry on her legacy.