

Advocates as Leaders

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My name is Eric Stoker and I'm a part of the Advocates as Leaders Self-Advocacy Speaker's Network. I have been a part of the network for one year, which is amazing. Let me tell you a little bit about the Advocates as Leaders Network. This network is a part of Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities, in partnership with the Utah Developmental Disabilities Council. The network has people with disabilities go out and train self-advocates, parents, professionals, community organizations and business about issues that we face every single day.

We have a total of nine presentations and are always developing new ones. Each presentation is designed and presented by self-advocates who have expertise in variety of subjects that impact the lives of people with disabilities. We use our skills to dispel myths about what people with disabilities truly believe, cherish and value. I present on several different topics, but the one I believe is the most important to me is *Living Strong with Autism*. I want people to know about the history of autism, and how people are successfully living with its challenges. Another reason I like this presentation is that I can tell my story from when I was first diagnosed with autism and my current achievements. The presentations the network currently offers are listed below. The new presentations that are in the works are *Internet Safety*; *Supported Decision*

Making; and *Managing Your Own Person "Directed "Plan.*

The presentation that stood out to me the most is the student led IEP's. The reason why this presentation stood out to me was because students are now leading their own IEPs, and speaking out for what goals they want to work on and what they want to do for their future. In our network, we have 10 speakers that have disabilities living throughout the state of Utah. We are in the process of hiring 4 more speakers this year to join the network. If you would like to learn more about our Advocates as Leaders Speakers network or want us to present a certain topic please contact [Amy Notwell](#). Here is a list of presentations that are currently offered: *Self-Advocacy Speaker's Network: Living Strong with Autism**The Ins and Outs and Ups and Downs of running your own IEP meeting**Choosing a Supported Life**Language Matters: Respect is the new "R" word**No Limits: Raising Expectations**Self Determination is for EVERYONE**Fair Chance***About the author:** Eric Stoker is the information specialist for the Utah Developmental Disabilities Council in Salt Lake City Utah. He is a part of the speaker's network and is the author of two books.

He is a big sports fan of football and basketball. Eric is a part of the Consumer Advisory Council and is also a part of the Utah Regional Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental disabilities as the consumer faculty at Utah State University.