NASHVILLE 2018
LEAP AWARD WINNER

The LEAP Award stands for Living, Encouraging, Achieving and Persisting. The award is presented to an individual who is age 14 or older living positively with mitochondrial disease. The Awardee overcomes daily challenges to achieve goals in career, family, and volunteer service. The individual demonstrates a positive attitude, hope for a brighter future, and an enthusiasm that inspires others.

The 2018 LEAP Award Winner is Andy Garrison. Garrison was four years old when he was diagnosed with Leigh’s Disease. He wanted to do everything his active brothers did. When there were obstacles that he couldn’t overcome, he pushed others to find a way to help. As a result of his persistence, he has gone river rafting, kayaking, and snorkeling, camping, and even surfing. He attained the rank of Eagle Scout with the help of an encouraging scoutmaster. He has participated in therapeutic horseback riding for over 20 years. He attended college, living on campus for two years. And when that ended, he knew he wanted to live independently, which he now does with help from roommates and aides.

Life for Garrison has never been spent on the sidelines. He lives near downtown Franklin where he wheels nearly every day. He’s made friends with the downtown merchants, residents and the many tourists who come to town. He’s proud to ask every one of them for support to fight this disease.

WASHINGTON, DC 2018
LEAP AWARD WINNER

The LEAP Award recognizes an individual living positively with mitochondrial disease, highlighting the person’s accomplishments and volunteer service.

UMOP presented the LEAP Award to 18 year old Michael Malocha of Northfield, MN. During a routine physical in 2015, it was discovered that Michael was having some vision problems. Within five days, Michael was diagnosed with LHON. He would lose a major portion of his vision within 6 to 8 weeks.

Michael takes time each month to speak to youth, his peers and adults about his daily challenges. He serves as a role model for other teens and young adults battling mitochondrial disease. In August of 2016, his vision returned to 20/20. Physicians don’t know if his vision will stay, but Michael lives his life not taking his sight for granted.