



FLORIDA Youth SHINE

NEWS

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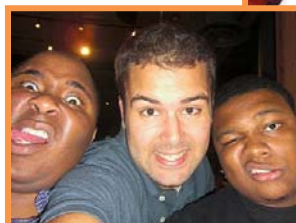


A Message from our Chair

- Jesse Wilson

As we move into a new year with new resolutions not only as a collective group but as individuals I wanted to share a few words of encouragement in the form of a poem. I truly enjoy being part of this unique family and hope each of you do as well. I am wishing each of you a happy new year as we build on our successes from 2011 and learn from goals we did not achieve.

Give to the winds your fears
Relieve to the ocean regret
For til your soul sails away
It must be guided, set by set
Keep on pursuing
All that is true
Frame each day and frame each night
May the fight never be lost and shall your wildest dreams come true
And if you shall fail, do not dismay
Quicker than a year is each new day
Let's have courage in places of common vulnerability
And humbleness in moments of great success
Let's not settle at seeing the best in someone
But triumph in bringing it out
Trust in something, market love
And always look within
To find yourself and be yourself
Even when the world is watching



Happy New Year!

EN

How to Donate

Florida Youth SHINE is funded and supported by Florida's Children First (FCF). Donations of any size can be made to FCF on behalf of FYS and will contribute to the continued growth and success of our program. To donate go to www.floridaschildrenfirst.org.

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1801 N. University Drive, Suite 3B, Coral Springs, Florida 33071 P: (954) 796-0860
Lindsay Baach C: (954) 857-9597 E: lindsay@floridayouthshine.org

www.floridayouthshine.org



2011 Year in Review

As we reflect on the incredible year Florida Youth SHINE had across the state in 2011, we remember that it all began with our chapter expansion initiative in 2010. After welcoming 8 new chapters over 100 new members into our family, we spent this year getting all of our new members involved in so many of our different projects. Here is our year in review:

January

20 members from across the state meet with the newly appointed Secretary of the Department of Children and Families, David Wilkins. During our lunch meeting we had the opportunity meet the Secretary and share bits of our stories with him and introduced him to the teens and young adults (the youth) that the Department is charged with caring for.



March

Statewide Chair, Derrick Riggins, joined FCF's Executive Director, Christina Spudeas, in Tallahassee for much of the 2011 Legislative Session representing all of us at the Capitol and speaking on our behalf in favor of SB 1902 (Independent Living).



April

Twenty five FYS members from across the state took to the Capitol during Children's Week 2011 spending time learning about where our legislative priorities stood, developing/practicing our talking points, and preparing to run our own advocacy training session before spending 3 days walking the halls of the Capitol speaking with two dozen legislators on the importance of the Independent Living bills making their way through the House and Senate. Though our efforts didn't lead to the passing of the IL Redesign in 2011, we made a big impression on many of the key players in the legislative process.

May

In 2010 we made such a big impression on Circuit 19 Judge Larry Schack (Port St. Lucie) at the Dependency Summit, FYS and FCF were invited to his circuit to share our "So You Came to Take Us Away: Now What?" panel during their 2 day conference. During this panel members were joined by foster parents and CPI's to share their experiences in the removal process and why it is important for youth to be handled with care during this most stressful time. Over 400 dependency professionals were in attendance.





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June

First, we spent 2 days at the NextGen teen conference for foster and adoptive children leading ice breakers and running 3 workshops (advocacy training, normalcy, and the trauma of removal) for the 125 teens in attendance. Then, we headed over to our June quarterly meeting where we elected our 2011-2012 Board of Directors:

Statewide Chair: Jesse Wilson (Jacksonville)

1st Vice Chair of Membership: Brian Smith (Pensacola)

2nd Vice Chair of Legislation: April White (Pinellas/Pasco)

Fundraising Chairs: Danielle McMahan (Hillsborough) & Manny Oliver (Palm Beach)

Secretary: David Gagne (Broward)



July

Palm Beach and Broward members participated in the first ever Tracy MacPharlin Initiative training to increase the number of pro-bono attorneys for youth in care in Broward County.

September

24 members came together in Orlando for DCF's Pathways to Independence conference and participated in two workshops with FCF.

Call for Help, Just Not 911: Asked the audience to think before they call 911 when a youth in care acts out in order to prevent youth in care from crossing over to the DJJ system.

Kids Can't have too Many People Who Love Them: Stressed the importance of post-adoption communication with a child's biological family.

In addition, FYS also had the opportunity to speak with Secretary Wilkins to share some of the concerns commonly brought up in our chapter meetings (sibling visitations, normalcy, obtaining their driver's license, etc.).



November

Pinellas/Pasco members participated in a FCF hosted training in Ft. Myers with over 40 dependency workings present to discuss the needs of the teens and young adults in the Independent Living program. Members shared their experiences navigating the Road to Independence and the powerful impact case managers have on the success of the young adults exiting care.



December

Six FYS members joined together in Tallahassee during Committee Week to walk the halls of the Capitol garnering support for SB 434(Rich) and HB 417(Glorioso) on Independent Living. This was FYS's second trip to the Capitol for Committee Week and the first opportunity for FYS members to testify before the Senate Committee for Children, Families, and Elderly Affairs. FYS's testimony was well received by the Senators and SB 434 passed with a unanimous vote and is headed to the Senate floor to be heard very early on during the 2012 session. We are very excited to watch these bills in 2012.

