



Florida Youth SHINE News

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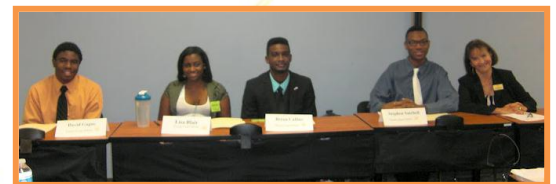
Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth Listening Tour Visits South Florida



FYS Broward with Representative Bass



With Broward County's very own Rep. Hastings



On Friday, March 30th the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth came to South Florida as a part of a national listening tour to examine the “best practices and ongoing challenges facing children in foster care” led by Caucus Co-Chair, Representative Karen Bass (CA) and Caucus member Representative Alcee Hastings (FL). As a part of Broward County’s presentation of services available in the community, the FYS Broward chapter was invited to present an hour long panel on their experiences in care. David, Breon, Stephen, and Lisa shared their stories, talked about the programs that have helped make them the successful young adults they are today, and what their plans are for the future (several have hopes of political futures). After a well-received panel presentation, all 4 members were offered jobs in Rep. Hastings office!! Our members shared what a life changing opportunity it was for them to speak with members of Congress:

David Gagne - Speaking at the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth was a great stride for, not only myself, but for every one of us that have experienced unfortunate situations in care and have been able to turn them around for the sake of the greater good. It was an elating feeling knowing that there are men and women that report back to Congress and lobbying for change on a national level. The fact that their stake in the fight for foster care reform is made stronger with my story, and the stories of many others, is a powerful thing.

Stephen Satchell - My experience meeting with the Congressional Caucus is something that will be a piece of me forever. When my fellow FYS family members and I were given this opportunity I knew we were going to change lives. We spoke with passion and integrity because we knew that sharing our stories would be beneficial to our younger brothers and sisters who are still in care. Every time I hear my peers speak I don’t get emotional, I grow more proud to be a part of a family with such big hearts.





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Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth (continued)

Lisa Blair - One small step for the Broward chapter and one giant step for FYS. Even more awesome than speaking at the Congressional Caucus was receiving a letter in the mail from Congresswoman Karen Bass afterward. She applauded each of us for standing up and sharing our stories in order to make a difference for our brothers and sisters in care. That letter was the encouragement I needed to keep me doing this forever.

For videos of the FYS panel and the Congressional Listening Tour check out our Facebook page.

All of our Chapters are Hard at Work



From left to right: Carlos, Jolene, Roosevelt, Tequila, and Ashtavia.

FYS Orlando – During the 2012 Judge’s Conference members from our Orlando chapter had an incredible opportunity to speak with a room full of brand new dependency and juvenile judges about their experiences while in foster care. Ashtavia, Roosevelt, Tequila, Jolene, and Carlos spoke on behalf of all FYS members and youth in care on a variety of topics including:

- The importance of youth in court regardless of age or school schedule
- Psychotropic medications
- The need for lawyers for kids in care
- The unique needs of crossover youth

A very special thank you to Judges Goodman and Tepper for including Florida Youth SHINE in this year’s training. We look forward to participating in next year’s conference as well.

FYS Pensacola (Circuit 1) – In recognition of Child Abuse Prevention month, members from the Pensacola area joined forces with the Gulf Coast Kids House “Blue to Better” campaign. Working from 4am to sunrise, members painted a local graffiti bridge bright blue and tagged it with the words “From Blue to Better” to increase awareness of child abuse within the community. Even though their hard work was soon painted over by other graffiti artists, the group was able to make a valuable impression on their local community and got the word out about child abuse prevention. Our members had such a great time working with the Gulf Coast Kids Home they’re already plotting more ways to work with them in the future.





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FYS Pinellas/Pasco - As a part of a local Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency Conference several FYS Pinellas/Pasco members worked with Ready for Life on a panel presentation for local professionals working with youth in care. "The Power of One" workshop sparked from the member's awareness that the field of social work is often a thankless and tiring job, but no matter how tired you are there is no way of knowing if the work you are doing is making yourself a child's "ONE". The "one" is often for unknown reasons able to bridge a seemingly impossible gap and make a profound impact on someone's life. With over fifty people in a crowded room, the FYS/Ready for Life panel was an opportunity for the member's to speak about their "one".



Each member shared a different story with different issues - some were runaways, other had had anger issues, drug problems or a fear of abandonment. But the one thing that each member had in common was that at one time they were all children lost within a system who grew into young adults equally as lost. Each member shared their attempts at navigating the path to adulthood lacking something vital in their lives - lack of family, support, self-esteem, faith, or even belief in themselves and their future. That is, until one person stepped into their lives when they needed it most and filled the void they were suffering from. From then on, the "one" was a source of security, love, normalcy, or even just a person to talk to. Their "one's" help heal them, forced them to face their truths, and challenged them to live better lives. The "one" helped them find their success.

As an illustration of the issues young adults aging out of care are faced with, our members also showed the group the baggage that weighs them down and often holds them back. With a variety of books (children's books, novels, and even text books) each member filled bags (many needed quite a few) representing the weight they carried with them. It was clear to those watching that the weight of their bags prevents them from easily putting their issues aside and even as successful young adults, the baggage still weighs heavily on them as they face everyday challenges.

The workshop was a huge success and so many of the social workers in the room shared with our members how touched and inspired they were by the stories they heard. As the chapter prepares to repeat this workshop, they want to know: **Who is your "one"?**

EMPOWER IMPROVE EDUCATE SUPPORT Celebrity Sighting

FYS Broward member, Stephen Satchell, had the opportunity to meet with Florida's First Lady Ann Scott during her recent visit to South Florida. Mrs. Scott was taking a tour of the FLITE Center – a one stop shop for all Independent Living services – in Ft. Lauderdale when she sat down with Stephen for a few minutes to learn about his experience in care and the services available to young adults who have aged out of care in Broward County. Stephen also bragged about being a member of Florida Youth SHINE and shared with her all about his experience in Tallahassee just a few weeks earlier. Mrs. Scott was very impressed with Stephen and looks forward to learning more about FYS during her travels across the state.

