

YouthACT Team Profile



YouthACT Guiding Lights

Youth: Madeline Miller

Adult Partner: Sharon Galloway

Supporting Organization Contact: Dana Renay

Supporting Organization: Autism Society of Indiana (ASI)

Introductions

Youth

My name is Madeline Miller, and I'm 18 years old and from Ft. Wayne, Indiana. My strengths are that I listen and try to hear what people in the world need from me. It is important to me that leaders are responsible to the people they are leading and trying to help. People who know me say that I am kind and that they appreciate how much I care about other people.

I participated in Indiana's Youth Leadership Program in 2014, and it really got me going. I came to understand that I have a responsibility to be a better advocate for myself and wish to do the same for other youth. YouthACT was introduced to me in the fall of 2014, and I have learned a great deal about advocacy, working with my peers, and contributing to goals that impact young people.

I'm working with Indiana's Systems of Care, which is trying to improve access to and quality of behavioral and mental health services for youth and families. I am working with them to revamp how we treat people with mental health conditions. I am helping them explore how to provide more person-centered/whole-person treatment instead of just treating to the diagnosis. I want to get more involved and bring more youth to the table of leadership. I wish to find family members who want to be more involved in changing the system. I've got good organizational support through Systems of Care and Mental Health America as we work together to build a regional/statewide peer network and family group. I would like to have my own nonprofit someday where I can help people with mental health conditions and disabilities create good and meaningful lives.

I am currently working on finishing my classes through home school to complete my high school education. I have an exciting, paid internship with the Jesters of University of St. Francis, which is a performance art program for adults with developmental disabilities. I work with the members in the visual art room and assist people to tell their own stories using photos, a variety of art mediums, and visual/audio storytelling.

Adult Partner

My name is Sharon Galloway, and I live and work in Monroe and Green Counties in Indiana. I am the founder of Success Defined LLC, which is a participant-driven community living organization in Solsberry, Indiana. The use of person-centered strategic planning is at the core of all our work. I have worked as a community inclusion specialist supporting people with complex challenges for nearly 30 years. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Organizational Behavior and

YouthACT Team Profile



Leadership from the University of San Francisco and acquired specialized training in organizational development and family-focused learning.

I designed Success Defined as a working partnership with individuals and families wanting to develop skills, strategies, and resources that foster sustainable independence. Our initiatives promote life and social skills; postsecondary education options; emergency preparedness training, decision-making and leadership skills; career preparation and employment; community-focused participation; and healthcare literacy. My short- and long-term goals are to continue to provide person-centered services to Indiana's youth, adults, families, and elders in ways that improve life quality, access, and community participation for people with disabilities and autism.

I learned about YouthACT in Indiana after the first Adult Partner for Autism Society of Indiana vacated his position, and they asked if I could fill in. I enjoy working with young people and helping youth explore advocacy, leadership skills, and transition into adulthood. I have valued my time with YouthACT and will continue to use the connections I have made and the NCWD/Youth and ODEP websites.

Supporting Organization and Contact

My name is Dana Renay, and I am the Executive Director of the Autism Society of Indiana. The Autism Society of Indiana (ASI) is working to engage youth through online activities and brought the Youth Leadership Forum to Indiana's youth in 2014 and 2015. Following that, ASI signed on as a supporting organization to Indiana's YouthACT team. ASI's mission is to improve the lives of all people affected by autism in Indiana. ASI is a leading resource in Indiana for connecting people who live with autism, and those who care about them, with resources, support, advocacy, and information tailored to their unique needs. ASI strives to create communities throughout the state in which people on the autism spectrum and their families are empowered, supported, and fully embraced by their community.

Activities

The activities we have been involved in this year include Help Make Hope and Youth M.O.V.E. Help Make Hope is a peer-led support group working in partnership with Mental Health of America in Allen County, Indiana. YouthACT teams must plan activities aimed towards their overall team goal. Madeline had the vision for this group as part of her YouthACT activities and manages a team of young people and their supporters to craft and share beautiful hand-made cards of encouragement and hope for all teens admitted to the hospital for mental health treatment and those in crisis.

Madeline is the chapter leader of the Ft. Wayne chapter of Youth M.O.V.E. and a statewide board member. Youth M.O.V.E. is a peer-led mental health advocacy organization and a leader within the national movement to focus on the person and not the diagnosis for treatment (go to <http://www.youthmovenational.org> to learn more). Madeline sits on the board of directors as a youth member and helps guide the organization's mission and activities. She first got involved with Youth M.O.V.E. around the same time that she applied to YouthACT, but participating in YouthACT has strengthened her leadership in Youth M.O.V.E. The resources and opportunities provided through YouthACT, particularly the training and technical support, has helped Madeline

YouthACT Team Profile



learn about facilitation, team activities, and written deliverables, which she utilizes in Youth M.O.V.E. She has also done informational and recruiting presentations with Youth M.O.V.E. and YouthACT, which has led to Madeline now working with Systems of Care in Allen County, IN.

Sharon is the lead facilitator for the Bloomington Self-Advocates, a local chapter of the Self-Advocates of Indiana Statewide group. The chapter will be moving away from a local day program into the community and is open to all area youth and young adults wanting to learn and contribute to the self-advocacy movement in our area.

We are most proud of Madeline's efforts with Help Make Hope and how she has invested many hours organizing, leading, and volunteering her time to this group. A friend and fellow member of this group lost her life to suicide this year and left a significant void in Madeline's life, as well as many others who knew her. Madeline is most proud of how she has been able to handle this situation of loss and be present for this friend's family and support group members. We have discussed how difficult it can be to know we must be at our best even when we feel at our worst. Following through when there is work to be done is a sign of a true and committed leader.

Changes have occurred as a result of our overall work as a YouthACT team. We are stronger together, have found ways to give to our communities, and have learned we can count on each other. We will continue to share what we have learned with others and provide YouthACT resources to those we train with, work with, and advocate with.

Peer Network

Because our team members live so far apart, we essentially have two peer networks. Help Make Hope, led by Madeline, has a united youth peer network and receives support through Mental Health America and has professional adult mentors working as volunteers. These adult mentors support the young people and train them on how to be mental health peer leaders. The Bloomington Self-Advocates, facilitated by Sharon, is a new community-centered group, and membership recruitment is open to anyone with a disability wanting to participate in the greater Bloomington, IN area.

TIPS FOR YOUTH AND ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

- Treat adults and youth the same and don't be afraid to be equal.
- Trust yourself; don't let anyone be bossy or push you off your ideas.
- Be as organic as possible; be welcoming and don't push people or turn them away.
- Collaboration and mutual respect are the keys to any youth-adult partnership.
- Respect both the youth and adult and take everyone seriously. Learn from age gaps and different perspectives and leadership styles. See your team members as mentors who can help you progress as a leader.
- Other youth and adults, particularly those that you work with on a team, are wonderful and important resources. It is important to reach out to others by phone and through technology, especially if you live in different places and cannot meet in person as often.

YouthACT Team Profile



Reflection

Opportunities like YouthACT are important because they improve youth leadership development. These opportunities help youth gain marketable skillsets in leadership, organization, communication, and teambuilding. Madeline has gained confidence and public speaking ability through YouthACT. She is also confident that her experience in YouthACT will help her gain employment in the future.

Since our involvement in YouthACT, we have learned we can't rely on others if we are not willing to learn how to help ourselves. If we want to see a change in the world, our voice matters, and we must learn how to use it and pass on what we learn to others.

Looking Forward

When our time with YouthACT comes to an end, we plan to continue on with the above-mentioned work because this is our vocation and passion. Madeline will keep supporting Youth M.O.V.E. and vows to continue fighting stigma and helping the mental health community in any way possible.