KYLECARES
The Kyle Johnson Foundation

Emily Whittaker-Smith and Annabel Devault - two students at separate universities on opposite sides of Massachusetts, simultaneously (and coincidentally) approached KyleCares to plan meaningful and impactful presentations for their sororities focused on mental health and suicide prevention. KyleCares is thrilled to recognize them both with our Quarterly Student Spotlight!

A senior at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst studying Public Health Science, Emily knows the pandemic has not been easy for many people, particularly college students. As the Education Chair responsible for planning numerous educational events each semester for the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, Emily worked closely with KyleCares and Minding Your Mind to schedule a dual speaker event entitled "Let's Talk About It: A Webinar About Mental Health Challenges During the Covid Era". Clinical Director Jon Mattleman educated the audience on tools to help recognize and support a friend with anxiety, and Young Adult Speaker Sarika Agarwal shared her personal experience with trying to overcome a self-imposed need to be perfect to the 50+ sisters in attendance heard.

To Emily, she learned the importance of opening mental health conversations – not only to educate everyone, but to comfort each other as well. Many of the sisters reached out afterwards to share how powerful the presentations were for them, and how grateful they were for the opportunity to talk.

As Executive Vice President of the Phi Sigma Rho sorority at Northeastern University in Boston, Annabel has been acutely aware of the struggles that many of her classmates faced over the last year and continue to face through the current semester. Many of the sisters in the sorority for women in science, engineering, and engineering technology experience anxiety, intense stress, depression, and the urge to compare themselves against strict standards of perfectionism that they set for themselves.

To assist them all, Annabel and her extended team planned a special Wellness Week to educate all about openly discussing mental health struggles that so many are dealing with. The week included a campus mental health resource presentation about self-care and the importance of being kinder to ourselves, lighthearted destress/mindfulness events, and a Minding Your Mind "Stories Over Stigma" presentation by Northeastern alumna Jenna Malley.

The sorority attendees especially appreciated the chance to ask anonymous questions of Jenna because they could ask questions they may not normally feel comfortable voicing publicly. They also very much identified with Jenna's struggles with anxiety surrounding academics, and it was nice to hear from someone who put into perspective that the kinds of feelings people experienced this semester and beyond are very normal and are experienced by others.