Student Advocacy Starts With Someone Who Listens

Anne Zager, Chapter Advisor of the Year at the Active Minds National Conference

Advocacy can take many forms. Sometimes it means speaking up. Sometimes it means organizing an event or sharing your own story. And sometimes, it means being the person who listens, encourages, and creates the space for others to find their voice. Anne Zager, a Clinical Social Worker and School Counselor in the Health and Wellness Services at Williston Northampton School in Easthampton, Massachusetts, has been doing just that for the past three and a half years as a co-advisor to the school's Active Minds chapter, which was launched with support from KyleCares.



Anne Zager, 2nd from right at the Active Minds National Conference in Washington, D.C.

This summer, Anne's dedication to her students was recognized on a national stage when she was named Chapter Advisor of the Year at the Active Minds National Conference in Washington, D.C. Along with her co-advisor and 3 Williston students, the group attended the DC conference where the had the amazing experience of advocating for the Campus Lifeline Act on Capitol Hill.

Anne describes herself as the "connective tissue" between the school and its students, working alongside them to amplify their voices and build a stronger community. She creates opportunities for students to talk about difficult subjects, encourages them to be vulnerable, and helps them recognize the strengths they already possess.

At the heart of her approach is a simple belief: students should be empowered to be authentic, trust their own voices, and share their stories in their own way. She also encourages them to embrace relationships with organizations like Active Minds and KyleCares, using the resources and connections those partnerships provide to strengthen their work on campus.
Anne is quick to point out that supporting student mental health is a team effort, with leadership from the Dean's Office and Head of School playing an important role as well.

For KyleCares, Anne's recognition is especially meaningful. We're proud to have played a small part in helping launch the chapter that has become a vehicle for student advocacy—and even prouder to see one of the people helping students find their voices recognized for the difference she makes. Congratulations Anne!