



Florida Youth SHINE

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Tallahassee

Treasure Coast (Vero Beach)

FYS January Quarterly Meeting

By: Tiervondria McCall, FYS Statewide Secretary



Excitement, hugs, and passion filled the city of Miami, when Florida Youth SHINE (FYS) was reunited for their January Quarterly Meeting. FYS spent the weekend celebrating their accomplishments, learning advocacy, strategic sharing, public speaking, leadership skills, teambuilding, sharing their stories, processing issues, and preparing for an amazing Children's Week.

Friday night kicked off with dinner and learning all about FYS. FYS members shared why they advocate created a visual advocacy mural. The board led some fun team builders and icebreakers. Some FYS members stayed up late to catch up with each other, welcome new friends, and have late night snacks.

On Saturday, we were up bright and early! The morning began at 9AM with a fashion show about dressing professional. Following the runway show, we had our quarterly board meeting where chapters shared their reports and all the amazing things they are doing. FYS Legislative Chair, **Anna**, FYS Membership Chair **Dan**, and FYS Fundraising Chair, **Jessica** led a presentation about advocacy and how you can effectively advocate. We also discussed strategic sharing and how members can share their stories. After a delicious lunch and photo shoot, FCF Executive Director, **Christina Spudeas** led a workshop to discuss FYS's 2017 legislative priorities. Later in the day, we welcomed **Robert Latham** from the Miami Youth Law Clinic and **Toni Robinson** from Palm Beach Legal Aid. They presented about Medicaid for foster youth and also processed issues with FYS surrounding Medicaid. We learned so much and had a very productive day!

Saturday night we got to explore Miami and South Beach! We all went for dinner on South Beach and got on a bus called a "Duck Tour." We had no idea what to expect but all of a sudden the bus turned into a boat! On the tour we learned all about the history of Miami, saw famous people's houses, and many historical sites. We even got to dance and sing. It was a great night out with our FYS family.

We ended our meeting on Sunday afternoon after sharing stories and processing issues about siblings, driver's licenses, accountability, and group homes. Mentors and Members broke into small breakout sessions and reported back to the group on their suggestions for actions. Before heading home FYS was reminded about how unique, amazing, and inspiring each of them truly are! They were all recognized with certificates for their hard work and dedication over the weekend.





Florida Youth SHINE

FYS Statewide Board Retreat

In December, the Florida Youth SHINE Statewide Board of Directors headed to Orlando for 3 days of hard work, strategic planning, leadership development, goal setting, and fun! The board had an opportunity to come together for 3 days and bond with one another, learn leadership skills, and plan for the year. They came up with fantastic ideas for FYS and planned some amazing things for the upcoming year.



The board worked hard to ensure their impact this year on FYS will be successful. They made sure to have some fun and visited Walt Disney World and had many family style meals where FYS members cooked for each other. It was great spending time together and learning about each other and their goals. The FYS board has some great things in store this year!

FYS Heads to D.C.

FYS members, **Chelsea Bramblett, Jessica Overstreet, Tabatha Barnes, Shang Han, and Ke-Ana Durham** attended the Foster Youth in Action Leaders for Change conference in Washington D.C. This powerful conference brought together over 100 attendees from youth advocacy organizations across the nation. FYS learned many leadership skills, approaches to youth advocacy, about issues around the nation, and models of youth advocacy. FYS chose to talk about sibling relationships as one of their issues. They discussed this topic with others from around the nation. FYS members presented in a breakout session about the leadership pipeline and how members and alumni can transition into new roles. They did an awesome job presenting to attendees from all over the country!

After a weekend of intensive training attendees of the Leaders for Change conference headed to the Capitol where they attended a press conference. FYS members also had an opportunity to speak with Senator Nelson's staff from Florida and share their stories. They even got some time to sightsee around D.C. and stopped by the CCAI office to learn about other programs available around the nation.

Tabatha said, "When I first attended the Leaders for Change Conference I didn't know what to expect. When I got there the atmosphere around me felt loving and opening. The youth there were so understanding. It was great to meet other peers who are making an impact on the system. This conference brought me out of my shell and gave me the confidence to take on more leadership roles." Tabatha is a member of the ManaSota chapter and was recently chosen to represent FYS on the Foster Youth in Action Leader's United Council.

Special thanks to our partners at Foster Youth in Action!





Florida Youth SHINE

SHINE SPOTLIGHT

Congrats to Outstanding FYS Youth!

Many FYS members around the state have received the honor of Outstanding Youth Advocate from Florida's Children First. We are so proud of our FYS members for receiving this award!

Congrats to:

Martavious Lowery, Orlando Youth Advocate Award Recipient
Lisa Jaweed, Orlando Youth Advocate Award Recipient
Tabatha Barnes, Sarasota Youth Advocate Award Recipient
Jazzman Lezama, Palm Beach Youth Advocate Award Recipient
Shang Han, Northeast Youth Advocate Award Recipient
Brian Thompson, Broward Youth Advocate Award Recipient



Mentor Spotlight

FYS is lucky to have amazing mentors around the state to support our members and chapters each day. Mentors are the backbone of our chapters.

Irvine Bourdeau

FYS SouthWest Chapter Mentor

Quality Management & Independent Living Specialist
 Children's Network of SW Florida

Proud Mentor Since: 2011

Hobby: Traveling, Shopping, Dancing,
 Interior Decorating, and Reading

Favorite Food: I eat everything! I am very health conscious but love chocolate ice cream!

She mentors because... being a mentor gives me the opportunity to make a difference in the life of at least one child in foster care. Guidance and emotional support are the two things that I believe I can provide to our members who do not stay long enough in one place to develop the sense of belonging that most of us long for in life. I feel like as an FYS Mentor, I am able to give my local FYS members an opportunity to belong to one of the best youth organizations in the nation. It takes a village to raise a child. The FYS village is the best one in my opinion and I am proud to be part of that village and I hope the SWFL members are too!

She loves FYS because... it gives the youth and young adults the opportunity to have their voices heard and the ability to be a part of the changes that they wish could happen in the system of care in Florida. More importantly, I love FYS for the family atmosphere and the opportunity to learn at least one new thing and to unfold our untapped potential at every statewide meeting.

Fun facts about Irvine: I am cool, open minded, and have a young heart!

Thank you Irvine, for your years of service, guidance, support, and impact!

FYS is successful because of amazing mentors like Irvine!



FYS Welcome's Nature Coast Chapter!

FYS recently added their newest chapter to our FYS family. The Nature Coast Chapter consists of Hernando, Citrus, Lake, Marion, and Sumter Counties. We are so excited to bring our roster to 14 amazing FYS Chapters around the state. Welcome to the family Nature Coast!

FYS Heads to Tallahassee!

FYS members from Pensacola, ManaSota, Orlando, Nature Coast, and Tallahassee headed to the capitol for several Senate and House committee meetings. FYS members have testified on behalf of Keys to Independence (SB60 and HB217) addressing the barriers youth in care face in obtaining a driver's license. Great job FYS!





Florida Youth SHINE

Chair's Corner

Hello FYS family,

The board has been working hard in so many different platforms to make sure we are actively and effectively advocating. Your board has been extremely busy. In December, we attended a board retreat where we focused on leadership development, future goals and plans for FYS this year. We dedicated an extensive amount of time to plan the quarterly meeting that many of you were able to attend in Miami and our planning continues as we plan for Children's Week in March. The quarterly meeting was a success, as always. We had so much fun, especially on our evening out when we took a duck tour through South Beach. Your chapter participants were hard working and effective advocates. Keep up the great work Chapters and FYS members.

What's coming up? In March, your board, chapter representatives, and Mentors will meet in Tallahassee to attend Children's Week. Meeting with all the legislators is my favorite part about Children's Week, but I am especially looking forward to our time together as an FYS family in Tallahassee. I am excited for the early mornings, late nights, hearing your personal stories develop and taking on the Capitol!

Sincerely,
Chelsea Bramblett, FYS Statewide Chair

Remembering a Special FYS Member

This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to a very special FYS Member,

Whitney Delilah Baptista.



In December, Florida Youth SHINE suffered a tragic loss. One of our youth, Whitney "Delilah" Baptista, was involved in a car accident and passed away. This news has been devastating to our FYS family and hard to grasp. We want to acknowledge what a beautiful person Whitney was, all of her involvement in FYS, and her amazing advocacy.

Whitney was a fierce advocate that deeply cared for others. Her involvement in FYS did not go without notice and we couldn't have been more thankful for her role in our organization. Whitney was a beautiful young lady who saw the goodness in everyone she encountered no matter what she had experienced in life, and she wanted nothing more than for youth in foster care to be loved and have every opportunity to succeed. Whitney was a determined young lady that educated the public and our state legislators about issues regarding psychotropic medication and a youth's right to have a voice in the use of these medications. She also advocated for issues pertaining to group homes and the tuition exemption for youth in foster care. It is because of Whitney's tireless efforts and personal testimony that these issues are so important to Florida Youth SHINE and we are so proud of her.

Whitney was an adventurous young woman that lit the room up as she entered with her glowing smile and bubbly personality and she will be deeply missed. She was dedicated to accomplishing her dreams while supporting and inspiring her peers. She was and always will remain a part of our Youth SHINE family and will be ingrained in our hearts forever.

