



Advocate for Change

Are there things in your life that you would like to change? Things that make you unhappy? Do you dream of things you would like to do but don't know how to make it happen? Anyone that speaks up for themselves, letting others know what they think is a self-advocate.

Being a Self-Advocate for change means:

- Solving problems and making decisions.
- Speaking for ourselves.
- Knowing rights and responsibilities.
- Contributing to your community.

SPEAKING OUT
can be
POWERFUL



As we learned last summer with Dr Jamie VanDycke, there are 2 levels of self-advocacy.

Personal Advocacy - Changes YOU (or a friend) need in your own supports and services. Examples: You need help with your banking; You are having trouble getting around town; Your friend doesn't like his job; Your friend doesn't like where he lives.

Systems Advocacy - Changes in policies or rules that EVERYONE needs. Examples: What kinds of family support can a family get; How money is used for developmental disability services; Who lives in an institution and who lives in the community with residential services.

I want to advocate for change, but ***HOW DO I DO IT?***

4 Steps to Change

1. What is the problem? Example: The stoplight doesn't last long enough for me to cross the street. After you know what the problem is, explain what would be better. The stoplight would be long enough so that people with disabilities could safely cross the street.

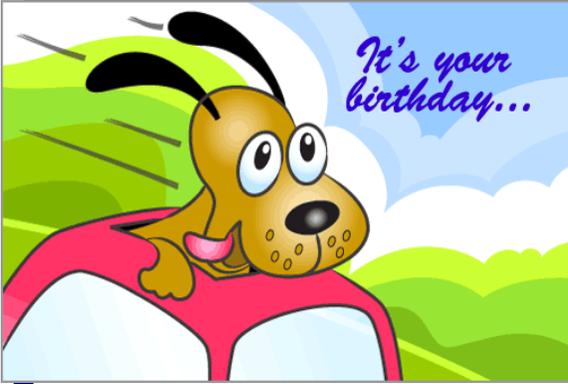
2. Decide who can fix the problem. Who can make the changes you want? Example: Yourself; Family; Friends; Support Staff; Teachers; Government.

3. Decide what actions to take. Ask for what you want and get others that will support your idea. Make your message louder. Ask again. Don't give up.

4. Did you get the change you wanted? If no, make changes to your plan and get back to work.

OKLAHOMA DEVELOPMENTAL





April Birthdays

Kyle Brannon (YLF 09)
 Roderick "Smiles" Halpainy (YLF 09)
 Shelbi Lonkerd (YLF 09)
 David Blose (YLF 08)
 Ben McFarland (YLF 08)
 Jack Minor (YLF 07)
 Julia Brown (YLF 04)
 Glen Adamson (Staff)

May Birthdays

Steven Bay (YLF 09)
 Mindy Blaser (YLF 09)
 Jennifer Karner (YLF 09)
 Zechariah Molden (YLF 09)
 Shay Adams (YLF 08)
 Cody Sword (YLF 07)
 Kimberly Peter (YLF 06)
 Cory Higgins (YLF 05)
 Brooke Kerr (YLF 05)
 Dustin Edwards (YLF 04)
 Jesse Marquez (YLF 04)
 Hillary Allen (Staff)
 Kiley Smith (Staff)
 Heather Caram (Staff)
 Mary Rachel Fenrick (Staff)

June Birthdays

Jessica Watson (YLF 10)
 Olivia Molden (YLF 09)
 Marta Seitz (YLF 09)
 Andrew Webb (YLF 09)
 Ty Loftis (YLF 07)
 Jeri Hubble (YLF 05)
 John Barton (YLF 04)
 Sharon King (YLF 04)
 Melissa Langley (YLF 04)
 Haley Evans (Staff)



GUESS WHO!

The January issue had a picture of **Julie Evans** in the Guess Who Section. Congratulations to **Rikney** who answered correctly!

Can you guess this issue's Guess Who? Be the first to with the correct answer! You may call, e-mail, or mail your answer to:

Ok Developmental Disabilities Council
 2401 NW 23rd St, Suite 74
 Oklahoma City, OK 73107

- OR - Jenifer.randle@okddc.ok.gov
 - OR - 405-521-4964 800-836-4470



Dig out your directory and send your YLF Pals a Birthday Card!

Youth with disabilities can often experience an extreme sense of social isolation, which comes out of not sharing a collective disability identity and disability pride. In ethnic minority communities culture, pride and identity are fostered in youth. However, most youth with disabilities grow up in families with parents who do not have a disability and no role models who have a disability.

Disability in society is seen as a problem, something that needs to be fixed or cured, or a tragedy. Youth with disabilities are often segregated in special education classes, placed in institutions, and often encouraged to hide their disability.

YO! assists youth with disabilities in learning about the disability rights movement, disability history, disability pride, disability organizing and advocacy. Youth with disabilities build community with each other, develop a sense of history, leadership, a positive disability identity, and organize and mobilize each other on issues that affect their lives.

YO! develops community organizing activities to build power bases among youth with disabilities so they can work effectively for change. Youth with disabilities will build community and create social change that help to end discriminatory practices and barriers that prevent access and inclusion in their local schools and communities.

Who's Who?

1. What is your full name? **Chris Borden**

2. When did you attend YLF? 2005

3. What are you doing now days? College and working on a business.

4. What reality show are you currently watching? I never could get into reality shows.

5. What is your favorite T.V. Show? Movie? That's a hard question. I like Lie To Me, Chuck, and Robot Chicken.



6. What is your favorite book? Polgara the Sorceress by David Eddings. Hands down, bar none. It is the best book I have ever read. Granted there are 12 other books leading up to it for a grand total of about 3000-3500 pages to read before you get to it. That's part of the fun though.

7. What was your favorite childhood toy? K'nex. Would you believe I'm still using them today?

8. What would people be surprised to learn about you? I think the most surprising thing people could learn about me and that I've only recently learned about myself is that I really enjoy socializing with others despite so called social anxiety. It took seeing that I had over 100 people on IM and another 80 or so in a chat room that I recognized by name and talked with often.

9. What is your proudest accomplishment? If someone ever writes my biography they'll get to pick that. Every day I wake up I'm more proud of who I am and what I'm doing.

10. What is your favorite moment at YLF? The debate in the capitol building was a lot of fun. It made me realize our representatives can't vote well when they don't know what they're voting on, can they? They're only human!

11. Anything else you would like to say to YLF Alumni? Disability is relative.

1. What is your full name? **LeDerick R. Horne**

2. When did you present at YLF? 2009 and 2010 (and soon to be 2011!)

3. What are you doing now days? Writing poetry, speaking throughout the country, and trying my best to be a quality husband and father.

4. What reality show are you currently watching? None.

5. What is your favorite T.V. show? Movie? Favorite TV: The Wire, Stargate Universe, The Walking Dead. Favorite Movie: 1986 remake of The Fly.



6. What is your favorite book? Frank Hurber's Dune.

7. What was your favorite childhood toy? Legos

8. What would people be surprised to learn about you? When I was about 14 years old, me and my friends used to crawl through the storm drains that ran under my neighborhood.

9. What is your proudest accomplishment? Finding my wife and convincing her that marrying me was a good idea.

10. What is your favorite moment at YLF? Playing the nickname game last year.

11. Anything else you would like to say to YLF Alumni? I am looking forward to the next one!



Who's Who?

1. What is your full name? Mary Rachel Fenrick
2. When did you work at YLF? 2010
3. What are you doing now days? Teaching students with autism at an elementary school in Norman, Volunteering with the youth group at my church, and Running.
4. What reality show are you currently watching? The Biggest Loser and The Bachelor.
5. What is your favorite T.V. Show? Movie? Favorite TV Show: The Big Bang Theory, Favorite Movie: The Blind Side.
6. What is your favorite book? Same Kind of Different a Me.
7. What was your favorite childhood toy? My doll, Katie.
8. What would people be surprised to learn about you? I drove a school bus while I was in college.
9. What is your proudest accomplishment? Running my first full marathon.
10. What is your favorite moment at YLF? I love watching the delegates work together to achieve goals, such as during the Toxic Waste game.
11. Anything else you would like to say to YLF Alumni? "Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who matter don't mind, and those who mind don't matter." -Dr.Suess



What is your full name? Rachel Katherine Barezinsky

When did you attend YLF? July 2010—Rachel attended YLF in **OHIO!**

What are you doing now days? Working as a clerk at a dentist office.

What reality show are you currently watching (if any)? Jersey Shore.

What is your favorite TV Show? "Grey's Anatomy" Movie? "Titanic"

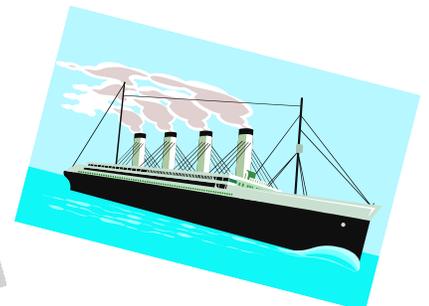
What is your favorite book? Harry Potter series

What was your favorite childhood toy? Any baby doll.

What would people be surprised to learn about you? For four years I wore a back brace due to scoliosis.

What is your favorite moment at YLF? Interviewing the paralympian, April Holmes.

Anything else you would like to say to YLF alumni? Always accept others for who they are and learn all you can from them.





Dear Brian...

Dear Brian,

I saw a group of kids teasing some kids in wheelchairs yesterday on lunch break. I went over there and asked them to stop but they started calling me dumb and retarded. I tried to talk to them about how words hurt, but it just got worse. I tried to leave the area but when I did I backed into someone with my wheelchair. I got suspended from school because the kids said I was trying to hit them with my chair. The teachers or principal wouldn't listen to my side of the story. Now my Mom and Dad think I shouldn't have an electric wheelchair because I'm not careful enough. I don't know what to do now! I just tried to stand up for people!

Signed,

Suspended

Dear Suspended,

First off, I want you to know that you did the right thing. It may not mean a lot to hear because you were already suspended, but it is important for you to hear that from someone. It is important to receive positive reinforcement, especially at your age (or any age for that matter!) We have all had those instances where we try to do the right thing and it turns out badly. I have been in those situations so many times, I can't count them. Controlling your emotions and using words is the right thing to do. I know that sounds like something a parent or other authority figure might say, but having been in enough of these situations, I know this is the truth. Again, the important thing for you to understand is that you did the right thing and you should continue to do the right thing.

I'm sorry that the teachers didn't listen to your side of the story. I would first try to get one of the students you were sticking up for to return the favor and explain to the teacher that you were sticking up for them. If that does not work, then take it in stride and turn your focus to preventing this situation from happening again. To be better prepared if this happens again, I would go to someone who will help you, a teacher, counselor, principal or someone that you trust and ask what you should do next time. If that doesn't get you anywhere I would ask your parents to schedule a meeting with the teacher so they can hear your side of the story. At the meeting you could also develop a plan to help prevent this from happening in the future. I suggest, that if this happens again, go and tell someone in charge about it and ask them to take care of the situation so you won't get in trouble.

As for convincing your parents that you still need an electric wheelchair, I would tell them that it was an accident. If they still don't believe you, I would explain how the electric wheelchair make you a lot more mobile than a having one that you have to push yourself. You may need to use a non-electric wheelchair to prove it to them, but do whatever it takes. Accidents happen, just be more cognizant of your surroundings in the future.

The most important thing is always stand up for the well-being of others!

Sincerely,

Brian Smith

ABOUT BRIAN: Brian graduated from YLF in Oklahoma's first class, 2004. After achieving his Bachelor's Degree in Public Relations from the University of Kansas, he has returned to work in Oklahoma. E-mail Jen your questions for Brian.

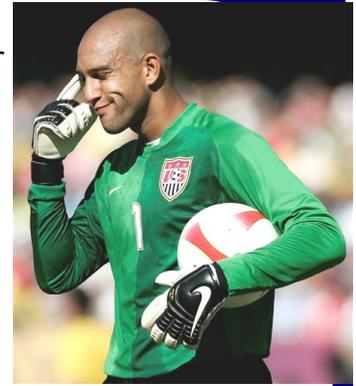
E-mail your questions for Brian: jenifer.randle@okddc.ok.gov

Tim Howard, Goal Keeper for the US Soccer team as well as the Goal Keeper for the English team Everton, is one of the best Goalies in the world. He also has the disability Tourette's syndrome. People with Tourette's are known to make sudden, repetitive, stereotyped movements (grimaces or strange compulsions) and vocalizations. Tim says that not only are people with this disability very noticeable but they are often teased and ridiculed. Tourette's affects one in 2500 people.

Tim has been successful in controlling symptoms of his disability. If you were to examine him for signs of Tourette's (eye blinking, neck jerking, vocal tics like hissing or repeating words), you may notice his eyes blink rapidly and sometimes swerve away; and that he clears his throat a lot. When he was younger, he would recite multiple numbers or have to touch his mother on the shoulder a given number of times before he could talk.

How would he describe himself now, on a scale of 1 to 10? "Some days, I would certainly be a 6 and other days a 9. It depends upon the situation. I learned to understand and accept that, some days, my disability will be heightened."

Tim says the impact of having a disability is always subjective, people think what they want. "I am not bothered now whether people accept me because I accept myself. I am confident." Tim also said this about not letting his disability destroy his ambition. "It's a hurdle, but it's certainly not a brick wall. We all have something that's different about us. Not bad, not good, just different. We all suffer from something and we need to be more understanding and more accepting of one another."



"Attitude is Everything"



Rachel Barezinsky attended the Youth Leadership Forum in Ohio in 2010. She recently told her story and was published in People Magazine.

Rachel and four high school friends were driving by a spooky old house one night in 2006 when the occupant opened fire and hit Rachel in the head and shoulder. The bullet passed through the center of her brain, leaving an injury that is difficult to survive, said her neurosurgeon. Her parents were told Rachel had a less than 1 percent chance of living. "But those doctors didn't know Rachel," says Rachel's father. Her neurosurgeon calls her recovery "close to a miracle."

Rachel was a senior in high school and a cheerleader when this happened. After this accident, some of her skull was removed to make room for her swollen brain. Just 1 month later, Rachel was named homecoming queen and returned to her high school in a wheelchair and helmet for the ceremony.

After years of physical and occupational therapy she can walk (though her left side is weak and she sometimes uses a cane). She spends hours a week on a treadmill and stationary bike and playing Wii games to improve her motor skills. "I've always been a determined person," Rachel said. "Why stop now when I need it more than ever?"

Rachel still has significant memory problems. She can't remember her boyfriend at the time of the shooting, and she relies on notes and photos to remind her of things she's done.

Rachel is an assistant in a dental office and taking a history class and she hopes to move out on her own and finally go to college soon. "Attitude is everything," says Rachel. "I am going to get my life back."



Amanda LaMunyon was born in Oklahoma in 1995. She began painting when she was seven years old and was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome at age eight. She loves to express herself through singing, painting and public speaking.

At age eight Amanda began to paint her impression of the songs she loves. She says she can share her faith through her art and wants to encourage others with learning differences or challenges of any kind not to give up but to dream big dreams.

Because of her desire to encourage others, Amanda has emerged from an inward world to a world of giving and caring. She sings and shares her art with many organizations to help raise money for children's health. Her greatest desire is to help find the cause of autism.

By sharing her story through the arts, Amanda has received many awards, including the "Caring Award," "The Prudential Spirit of Community Award," "The President's Daily Points of Light," "The President's Volunteer Service Award," "Outstanding Individual with Autism of the Year" with ASA, "The National American Miss National Volunteer Service Award" and the "Yes I Can Award," with CEC. She was honored before the Oklahoma State Senate.

She has been honored to give President George W. Bush her painting of "Our Flag Was Still There", former First Lady Nancy Reagan her portrait painting of President Ronald Reagan, and to First Lady of Nevada Dawn Gibbons her painting of "God Bless the USA."

Amanda has been honored to be included in the books: Island of Genius, by Dr. Darold Treffert, The Art of Autism, by Debbie Hosseini and Dr. Rosa Martinez, Drawing Autism, by Jill Mullens, Girls Under the Umbrella of the Autism Spectrum by Dr. Ernsperger and Danielle Wendell (her painting graced the cover of this book) and A Girl's Guide to Achieving in the Arts by Dr. Kristen Stephens, and Dr. Frances Karnes.



Amanda's says, "It is important that we as American's take the lead to find the cause, cure and prevention of Autism. We have the privilege and freedom in our great country to raise money and speak about our concerns. It has been my privilege to work with Children's Miracle Network, Autism Speaks, The Lili Claire Foundation, Dr. Rosa Martinez with "Strokes of Genius" and many other organizations. I hope to continue to share my art and my story of overcoming challenges."

Read more about Amanda and see other paintings she has done online: <http://www.amandalamunyon.com/>



How You Can Change the World One Step At A Time

By: Michael D. Duignan

When I was young, I did not have a care in the world. I used to play with the other kids, and I used to run around like any other child. During this time, when I felt like everyone else, my mom started noticing things I did. As a small child could not tell my right from my left. I would always mix up cellar and attic, and the front and back yard. When I was in 3rd grade my teacher also noticed things like that and talked to my parents about being tested. My mom, recalling what took place since I was little, thought it was a perfect idea.

Being in 3rd grade you want nothing more than to be considered “normal.” We had students who were going to the resource room and were labeled as “stupid” or “slow.” So, of course I became very frustrated when my mom brought the idea up to me. Well, I went for the testing and found that I was learning disabled. In the beginning I used to hide it and not tell anyone where I was going. I made up lies and told them I was being tested for a new kind of program. I attended the resource center from 3rd to 6th grade. The whole time, I felt “odd” or “dumb.”

In 7th and 8th it was a lot easier for me to hide my disability and disregard mistakes. By high school is when I started coming clean with my disability. It happened as a couple of kids were making fun of one of my friends who was learning disabled. They were calling him names and pushing him. I of course was nervous but something in me decided to tell them that I was also, and if they had a problem they can deal with me. I spoke, scared out of my mind, that I now am letting out my secret. In doing so, I thought they would start making fun of me, but they actually were surprised. They started actually asking questions because to them, I was one of the smart kids, so I could not be “stupid.” I found out that the problem was they just did not know about learning disabilities, because they could not see the disability, so how could they understand it. That was a major change in my life.

After that moment, I went to our guidance department and asked if I could start talking to students who were just identified as learning disabled. So, a couple of times a week I would talk to students about what they were going through, and coach them through the different emotions and thoughts they had. In fact, when I was a junior and senior in high school, I did a presentation to the new incoming students and then to the whole high school. There were a number of students who came up to me after, and said they never knew what we went through, or how the disability effects people. In college I conducted similar presentations to perspective, new, and current students. Through that one experience it has helped me learn that people still need to learn about learning disabilities, and need to be aware of the needs and services they can receive.

Now, I am 25 and I work for a college and am the Coordinator of Student Development and Campus Programming. I have just started my Masters in Organizational Management and have talked to a number of people about my disabilities. I in fact help my own co-workers to understand what a learning disability is, and how to look for signs.

So, the best advice is not to be afraid, and instead of hiding it, rejoice. Because I always found when I received an A that meant more to me, then my friend who did not have a disability, because to me, that one grade showed me that I can do anything no matter what obstacles I need to overcome. The best thing that ever happened to me, was not winning in sports, not graduating from college, not even getting married, it is every time I can change the way people think about people with a Learning Disability. One person can make a difference and I am a perfect example of that.

**“One person
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Michael D. Duignan, Coordinator of Student Development & Campus Programming, Sage College of Albany

Omigosh! Did you know June 10 is Iced Tea Day?

dreamnight at the zoo



Dreamnight at the Oklahoma City Zoo will be held this year on **Friday, June 3**. This is an event for families who have a child with a disability. To receive an invitation call the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council at 405-521-4984 or 1-800-836-4470. You must have an invitation to attend.



SpringFest Garden Market & Festival: April 8-9 at the Tulsa Garden Center (2435 S Peoria). 9am to 4pm.

Tech Now Competition: April 16 at Bethany High School.

The Castle of Muskogee 16th Annual Renaissance Fair: Every Saturday and Sunday in May! 10:30am to 6pm (rain or shine!). Buy tickets online at www.okcastle.com.

Oklahoma City Arts Festival: April 26-May 1 in downtown Oklahoma City.

Paseo Arts Festival: May 28-30 in the Paseo Arts District in Oklahoma City (Located at NW 28th and North Walker to North Dewey). Free Admission.



UCO Endeavor Games

Infinite Possibilities

for an active healthy lifestyle

The UCO Endeavor Games are a Wheelchair and Ambulatory Sports, USA level 3 sanctioned event. **Athletes ages 7-21 are encouraged to use their Endeavor Games results to qualify for the National Junior Disability Championship (NJDC).** NJDC is the largest multi-sport, multi-disability event for juniors in the United States. The WASUSA premier event brings together hundreds of athletes with physical disabilities from all over North America to compete in archery, field, table tennis, track, swimming, and weightlifting.

The UCO Endeavor games will host 11 sport competitions **June 10-12, 2011**. Athletes are encouraged to participate in as many sports as possible, without conflicts in time. Please note for Outdoor Archery and Wheelchair Track, athletes must provide their own equipment. If you're interested, contact Leigha Jones, Sports Programs Coordinator: (405) 974 - 3160.

Congratulations and Thank you to the Alumni who have sent in one or many "BLUE CARDS"! Since the last newsletter, I've gotten a lot of blue cards! Thank you for remembering to share! Here are the number of blue cards turned in by YLF graduation years as of June 2010:

YLF 2004: **3** Blue Cards

YLF 2005: **11** Blue Cards

YLF 2006: **12** Blue Cards

YLF 2007: **8** Blue Cards

YLF 2008: **0** Blue Cards

YLF 2009: **53** Blue Cards

YLF 2010: **128** Blue Cards

You never know who is watching or who you are touching by your actions. Keep it up!

How to make a Dirt Baby by Cristina Craig, YLF09

Things you'll need for your very own dirt baby:

- 1 knee-high nylon stocking
- Grass seed
- Top soil
- 16-oz. plastic or glass clear cup
- Water
- Glue
- Small craft eyes
- Red pipe cleaner
- Spray bottle filled with water

Directions:

- 1) Have each students place 1-2 teaspoons of grass seed in the toe of their nylon. This is where the grass will sprout from and grow. As the grass seed sprouts and grows it will look like hair. **Note:** When you are making the dirt babies, think upside down. The toe of the nylon will become the top of the dirt baby's head.
- 2) Pour about 1 1/2 cups of potting soil into the nylon, covering the grass seed in the toe area.
- 3) Tie a knot in the nylon right under the ball of soil.
- 4) Glue eyes and felt on the nylon to make a face on the dirt baby.
- 5) Place the dirt baby, head side up, in the 16 oz. cup filled halfway with water.
- 6) Spray top of head with water.
- 7) Check your baby during the day. Make sure the cup is always kept 1/2 full.

Your baby should sprout "hair" in 10 or so days. Don't forget to give your baby a haircut!

Send your dirt baby pics to Jen:
Jenifer.randle@okddc.ok.gov

