

THE VOICES of the Commonwealth

Volume 1, Issue 1

June –August 2019



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Calendar of Events:

- * September 14– Eastern Mountain KY RISE Regional Event at Natural Bridge
- * September 28– Cumberland KY RISE Regional Event at Tree Top Adventure
- * October 4– North Eastern KY RISE Regional Event Haunted Trail at Levi Jackson Park
- * October 22– VOC State Wide Meeting and Training in Radcliff KY

“Moving Pictures” 2019 Youth Empowerment Conference

This year’s youth empowerment conference took place at the Marriot at Griffin Gate in Lexington KY on June 11-12. It was attended by over 120 youth and youth advocates from all across the state of KY. The theme for this year’s conference was *Moving Pictures: Based on a True Story*. The conference was filled with workshops, resource fair presenters, special keynote speakers, an emcee, dinner and red carpet/dance, and many more life changing and building activities. To quote Lorraine Wilbur, Chafee Program Administrator, “This year’s theme, ‘Moving Pictures’ is a declaration that you are the director of your

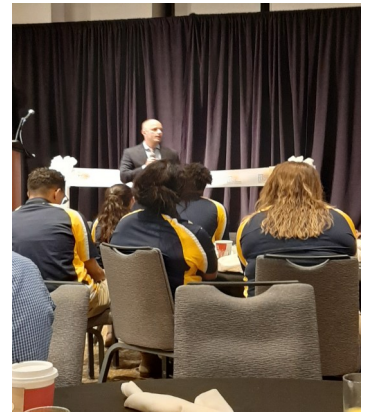
own life. Regardless, of the challenges or ‘plot’ twists you have faced thus far, you have the capacity to write your own happy ending.”

The attendees also witnessed the unveiling of KY RISE, the new Independent Living Program.

Commissioner Eric Clark addressed the attendees and completed the ceremony with a ribbon cutting and cake! (Pictured)



VOC employees pictured Glenda Wright, Tyler Hunter, Athenia Brown, Christina Brown, Amanda Payne, Sam Fuller, Quavie Elmore, Danasha Smith, Josh Degnan, Cameron Gallo-way, Alexis Dickerson and Tamara Vest



Family First Regional Convening



VOC Chris Hagans spoke at all nine regional FFPSA convenings. These began at Salt River Trail June 5th and concluded July 12 in the North Eastern region. Based on the findings of Shannon Moody, policy director for KYA, Chris shared his testimony with over 3,200 people both live and online streaming. The Family First Prevention Services Act was passed as Federal Law in 2018 and is to be implemented by all states by 2021. The nine regional convenings in KY were to allow state workers and local community stakeholders an opportunity to hear about the new law that helps ensure that all children grow up in families in the least restrictive, most family like setting.

Foster Parent Preservice Training Panel Events

The foster parent preservice training panels have been great opportunities for the VOC to share their story to prospective foster parents. The VOC speak out so that these parents, being trained, will consider fostering teens. The VOC speaking to the prospective foster parents about fostering teens is part of the diligent recruitment task.



FPS Lakes region in July with VOC Quavie Elmore. Also pictured trainer Gail Dick and former foster youth, now advocate, Jessie Kruger.

VOC employees Tyler Hunter, Chris Hagans, Tamara Vest, and new VOC employee Nina Guerrero were invited to Florence KY August 13th to speak on an FPS panel. (pictured on the right) "The VOC were wonderful and their stories impactful and inspirational.", stated Jennifer Wiehe, R&C Supervisor.



Continuous Quality Improvement at Northern Kentucky University

The VOC were invited on August the 15th to the Northern Blue Regional Youth Quality Improvement Event at NKU. Tyler Hunter, Tamara Vest, Chris Hagans, and new VOC employee Nina Guerrero were present to share about their life in foster care, recommitment, the importance of using the youth voice, and becoming a

VOC employee. The VOC partnered with Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA) and shared with the youth using examples from opportunities given on how to be an advocate and initiate changes within systems and policies. This included developing a network of partners and important points of contact within in the child welfare system.

The Chafee Program Administrator, Lorraine Wilbur, was on hand to talk about the new KY RISE portal and answer any questions about accessing the portal and all the features for the youth.

<https://prdweb.chfs.ky.gov/kyrise/>

"We can speak up today, so that what happened to us won't ever happen again" Chris Hagans, VOC



Washington D.C. Chafee Program Meeting

VOC Tyler Hunter and Tamara Vest were chosen to attend this year's Chafee Program Meeting with Chafee Program Administrator Lorraine Wilbur. The purpose of the meeting was to provide administrators and youth ambassadors opportunities to engage, partner, and listen to young people in important conversations that directly impact them and their families. They also learned to cultivate connections and recognize networking opportunities to be able to share ideas across the continuum of the child and family services spectrum. The meeting also addressed how the Chafee program can play a role in strengthening families.

**"I loved hearing from youth all over the nation about their views on the child welfare system and their suggestions for making improvements."
Tamara Vest, VOC**



Tyler Hunter, Tamara Vest, and Lorraine Wilbur in DC.

Daniel Memorial National Independent Living Conference 2019

VOC, ILSs, DCBS Central Office Staff and MSU Staff had the opportunity to attend the Daniel Memorial National Independent Living Conference in Orlando, Florida August 26-30. Daniel's mission is to improve the lives of children and families. One way they do that is by providing professional development through the national annual conference for professionals and youth in care. "Growing Pains" includes experts in the field of inde-

pendent living who lead training sessions, workshops, key note presentations, and leadership and team building activities. "Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to come to FL. I learned so much (at the conference) and had a great time." Tamara Vest, VOC

Pictured: Tyler Hunter (VOC), Tamara Vest (VOC), Loraine Wilbur (Chafee PA), Sheila Butler (ILS), Ryker Wilson (ILC), Cameron Galloway (VOC),

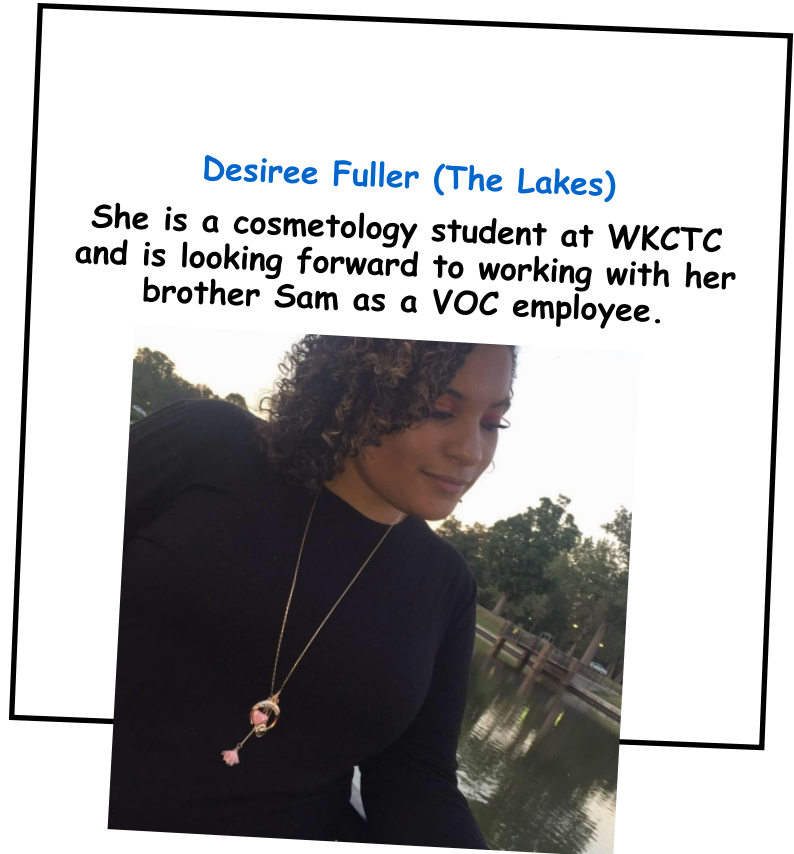
Chris Hagans (VOC), Paula Saenz (Transitional Services Branch Manager), Chorya Morton (ILS), Amy Ramage (ILS), Jessie Kruger (MSU student and former foster youth), Jessica Benge-Reynolds (ILS), Christina Brown (VOC), and not pictured but present, Gayle Learned (ILS)



New VOC Employees!!



Ginger (Kay) Sanderson
The Lakes Region
Ginger studies
social work at WKCTC.



I am Maria Guerrero, but go by Nina for short. I am currently going to Western Kentucky University to become a Social Worker, with Accounting as another major. I'm glad to have become a member of the VOC. I have been in and out of foster care all my life. But finally have found the family I longed for as a child. I will forever be thankful for the opportunity to be a member of the VOC.



Brandy Johnson is a social work student at Western KY University. She is also a Two Rivers VOC representative who will be going to the Eastern KY RISE regional event and is looking forward to working as a VOC employee.



Kentucky
RISE
Resources for Independence
Success and Empowerment
<https://prdweb.chfs.ky.gov/kyrise/>

The Voices of the Commonwealth (VOC) are KY's foster youth council of employees. They consist of current and former foster youth ages 14-23 throughout the state of KY. Their mission is to call attention to unresolved needs, and sometimes unheard voices of youth in care.