



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MAGELLAN YOUTH GROUP BRING SUCCESS STORIES, INSPIRATION TO CAPITOL

Magellan Youth Leaders Inspiring Future Empowerment (MY LIFE)

Share Goals and Accomplishments With State Legislators

PHOENIX – Magellan Youth Leaders Inspiring Future Empowerment (MY LIFE) today held a Youth Day at the state capitol for Arizona Legislators. The group, which consists of 13 to 23 year olds who have experience with mental health, substance abuse and foster care issues, advises Magellan Health Services on ways it can improve the system for teens and young adults. MY LIFE members brought cupcakes and other refreshments to the lawn, shared stories with lawmakers of how they are overcoming their struggles and are working to make life better for others. The MY LIFE members also presented their top four ideas for lawmakers to consider when crafting policies affecting the youth dealing with behavioral health issues (see page 3 for ideas) and took a tour of the state capitol.

“We are thrilled that we had the opportunity today to bring one of our most resilient and inspiring groups to the Capitol,” said Richard Clarke, CEO of Magellan Health Services. “MY LIFE is part of our transformation to a more community-driven system. This is a group of young adults that have first hand experience with behavioral health issues and we look directly to them for input on how to improve our youth-focused services and programs. We are really proud of the work MY LIFE is doing.”

More than 20 MY LIFE members kicked off the day by hosting a dessert reception on the Capitol Lawn for State Senators and Representatives. The group then had the privilege of being introduced in the House of Representatives by State Representative Ed Ableser, an advocate of mental health issues. MY LIFE members were then treated to a tour of the Capitol building, a first for all of them.

State Representative Kyrsten Sinema praised the group’s efforts to battle behavioral health stigma among young adults. “I think it’s absolutely wonderful that MY LIFE has been so proactive in confronting these issues and affecting change in the system. These young adults care so much about their community that they are using their shared experiences to improve the way care is delivered to people in need. This is exactly the type of activism we hope for in younger generations, and I’m thrilled that Magellan has taken the initiative to use their energy in a positive and constructive way.”

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“Today was a great day. We got to talk about all of the things we’re doing at MY LIFE and how we’re trying to help other youth dealing with similar issues,” said 18-year old Kennah, a member of MY LIFE. “We appreciated the opportunity to meet our State Representatives and Senators and I hope that everyone came away with a better understanding of what MY LIFE does.”

At the reception, MY LIFE members also performed live dances, sang songs and read poetry. Magellan of Arizona Development Manager and MY LIFE coordinator Greg Dicharry says “MY LIFE has quickly become one of the leading youth groups, both locally and nationally, that is focused on addressing these issues. This innovative group of youth leaders is a tremendous asset to behavioral health professional and policy makers alike, because they can use their personal experience to tell us which policies, programs and services work and help us fix the ones that don’t.”

Up next for MY LIFE is the second annual MY FEST - MY FEST '09 – an all day festival featuring live bands, entertainers, artists, food, youth groups and a wide variety of youth-based Valley organizations aimed at reducing the stigma associated with behavioral health issues. MY FEST '09 will take place on Saturday, April 11th in Tempe Beach Park and is planned and produced by MY LIFE youth members.

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What's important to us:

Youth Involvement and Voice	
1	<p>Involve youth! Consult us when creating laws/systems that affect us</p> <p>Acknowledge what we are doing to help the community and ourselves</p> <p>Give us more opportunities for peer mentoring</p>
Better Education and Information	
2	<p>Work to accommodate various learning styles</p> <p>Provide sex-education, including information on birth control, STDs, pregnancy options and resources</p> <p>Provide information and education on foster care</p> <p>Provide information and education on behavioral/mental health</p> <p>Provide information and education on prevention programs</p> <p>Provide information and education on substance abuse</p> <p>Provide information and education on general resources/support</p> <p>Provide information and education on services available to youth entering the adult system</p> <p>Better prepare us for independent/adult living</p> <p>Help us find good jobs/employment</p> <p>Help us prepare for job interviews (resume, interview skills)</p>
Improve System	
3	<p>Provide greater permanency and consistency with placements, schools and social workers/case manager</p> <p>Help us have the ability to get a learner's permit/driver's license</p> <p>Help us have a more "normal" childhood experience, including greater opportunities for youth in group homes, such as dating or slumber parties</p> <p>Provide better/more transportation</p> <p>Help us create more individualized treatment plans</p> <p>Enforce subsidies for youth</p> <p>Have more involvement in case plans by case managers/counselors, perhaps model a system like Big Brothers Big Sisters</p> <p>Streamline processes that allow youth to get documentation, such as SSI, birth certificate, etc.</p> <p>Help transition-age youth find safe, clean and affordable places to live (e.g., no credit check, month to month leases)</p> <p>More funding for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Foster care ❖ Youth groups/programs ❖ Substance abuse treatment programs ❖ Prevention programs ❖ Behavioral/mental health education and programs
Communication and Family	
4	<p>Keep families together as much as possible to reduce out-of-home placements</p> <p>Increase communication among youth, families and system</p> <p>Help foster healthy relationships between youth and families</p>