

ELI LEFF

AYONA

OUR LIVES IN TRANSITION

- The importance of advocacy and finding your voice during the Transition to Adulthood
- Three Regional Behavioral Health Authorities:
 - Health Choice Integrated Care (HCIC)
 - Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care (MMIC)
 - Cenpatico Integrated Care

MY STORY

I was born at FMC in flagstaff Arizona. I am now 19 years old.

- When I was about 8 months old give or take I was abused by my father. I suffered a spiral fracture on my arm and a fractured skull
- I was taken by social services while my parents were investigated for my injuries. and placed in my grandmothers care.
- My father was convicted of child abuse and given a prison sentence. I was put into my mothers custody again.

MY STORY (CONT.)

- As I grew up I was diagnosed with ADHD and bipolar. As I got older the bipolar diagnosis was rescinded. I am currently diagnosed with ADHD and moderate OCD.
- Throughout my life I have been bullied and belittled. I have been homeless. I have been shuffled between my parents.
- I now work at Walmart making 10 dollars an hour and I live in my own apartment with three roommates. I pay my own bills. I feed myself. **I am awesome.**

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

- I think youth leadership is important because many youth today feel as though they have no voice. All the important decisions of their life are being made for them by adults who do not fully understand the struggles and problems they have.
- Groups like AYONA make us feel empowered because it feels as though we are speaking for ourselves.
- They make us feel that we can make a difference for all the kids that come after us.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FEEDBACK

- When I was receiving services I always felt I never had a say in my treatment.
- My mom, counselor, or therapist would discuss my problems and prescribe me more and more meds while I sat there in the chair.
- My opinion was never taken into account and the side effects of the medication often took months for anyone else to notice and more months before I was taken off of it.

SCHOOL FEEDBACK

- I had the same problems in school. I felt like I was never allowed to speak for myself. If I had a problem with a teacher or a disagreement with a student and I tried to speak up about it *my words were ignored.*
- People politely listened to me, then my voice was discarded.
- I had my IEP meetings I did the same song and dance as with a therapist.
- I sat in a chair (when I was allowed to be present) and listened as my life was mapped out often by teachers I did not get along with and I was expected to go along with an IEP plan that I had felt I had no say in.
- *Other people decided what my needs were. They didn't ask me.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ask the kids what they think.
- Ask them what their needs are.
- Trust them to know what they need.
- Don't assume they don't know just based on age.
- It is one of the best ways to alienate them.
- Work with them and if you made a plan check up on it and see if its working.
- This goes for both school and behavioral health services.
- **Give the kids a voice.**



Couple of subjects

- When I moved to Flag
- My childhood
- My life now
- AYONA



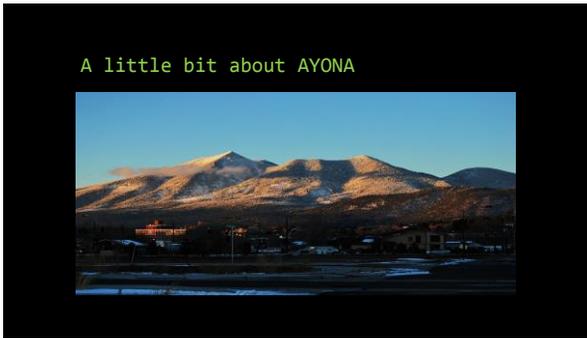
My new house

Growing up in Flagstaff

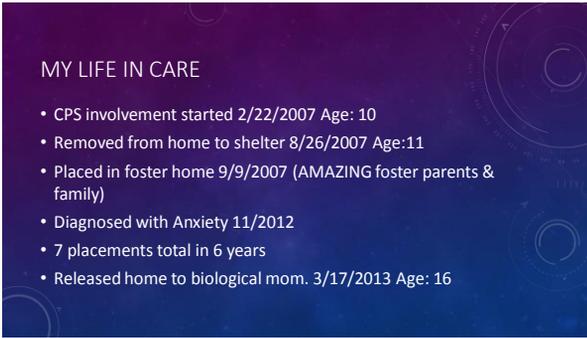


My life now

What it's like being on my own













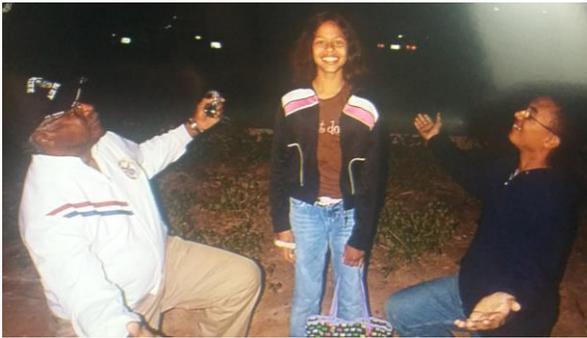




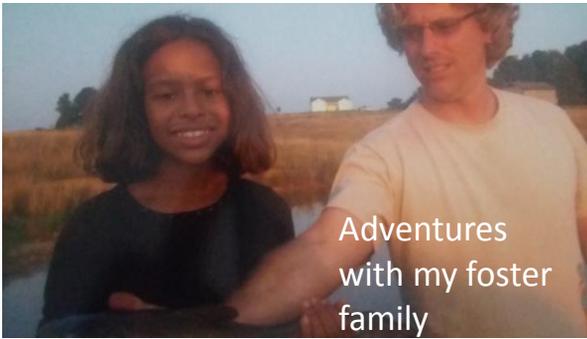




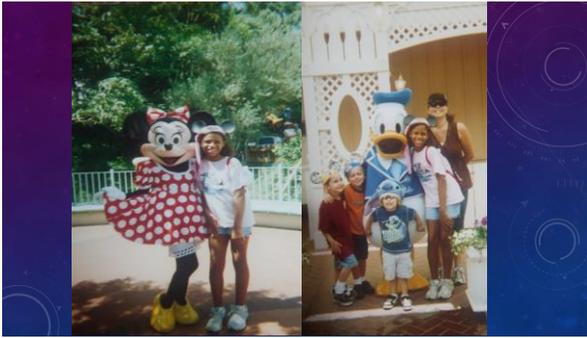
















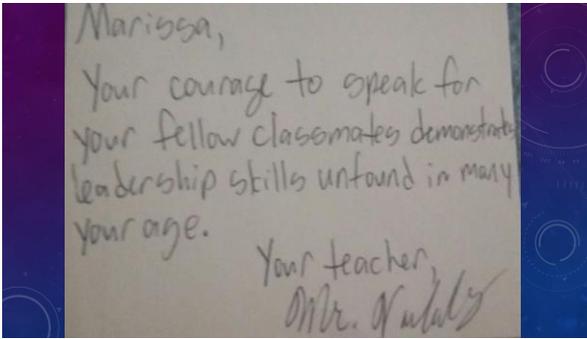


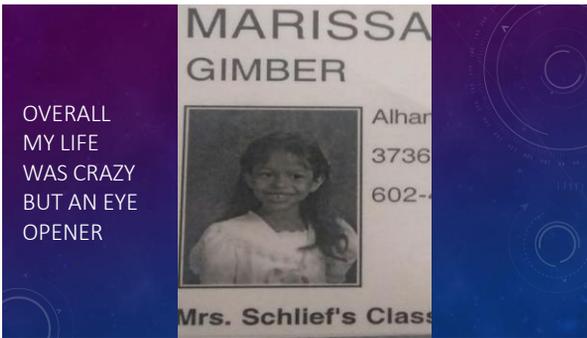


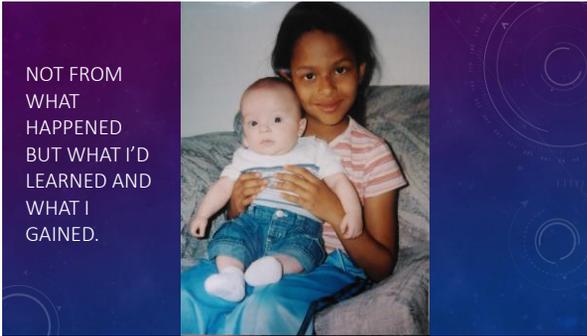


Placed with maternal grandparents.

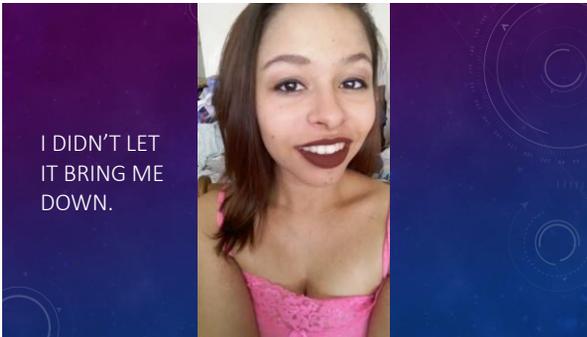








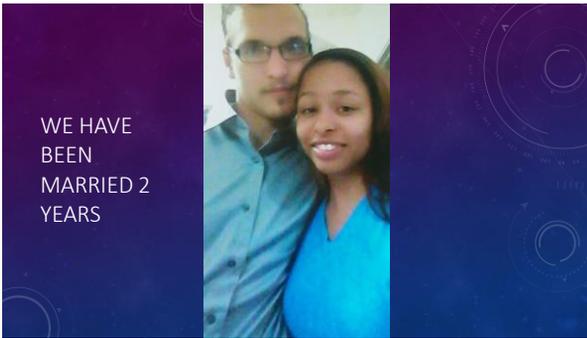
NOT FROM
WHAT
HAPPENED
BUT WHAT I'D
LEARNED AND
WHAT I
GAINED.



I DIDN'T LET
IT BRING ME
DOWN.



I MET MY
HUSBAND
ALONG
THE WAY.











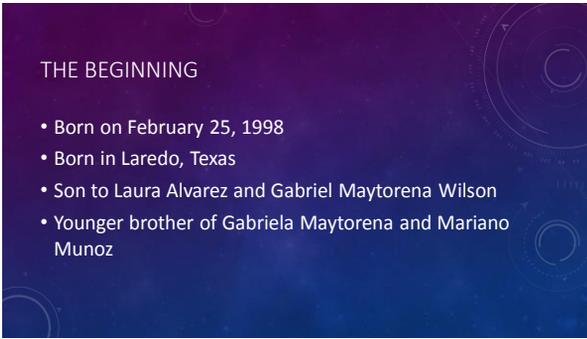


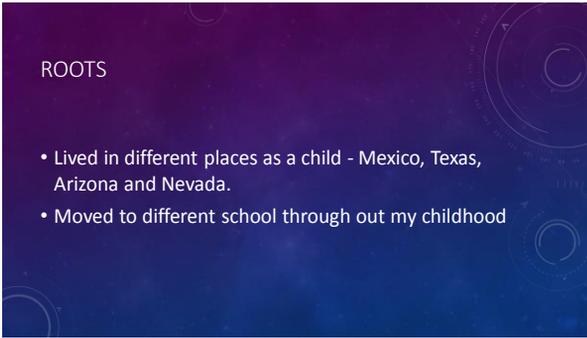












OBSTACLES OF LIFE

- Witnessed the passing of my great grandmother
- Abandoned by my father at the age of 9
- The passing of my friend Bryan in fourth grade
- Diagnosed with four mental illnesses at the age of 12 - Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Severe Depression and Severe Anxiety

RECOVERY

- Hospitalized in behavioral health hospitals two times after two suicide attempts.
- Taken various prescribed medicines to control my mental illnesses.
- Up to 10 different medicines at on one point
- Have received treatment from different clinics which include Jewish Family Children Services, Devereux, and Southwest Network

RECOVERY PT. 2

Mentoring services with H.Y.P.E, JFCS Transition to Adulthood and Reach Family Services

Therapy for two years from age 12 to 15

Had two high needs case managers in two different occasions.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE SYSTEM

- First client Facilitator for UNITY (Understanding New Ideas Through Youth)
- Part of the Youth Leadership Council for H.Y.P.E (Helping Youth Participate and Excel)
- Member of the Youth Leadership Council for MMIC (Mercy Maricopa Integrated HealthCare)
- Summer Intern for Summer Child watch Program at the Family Involvement Center
- Member of the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition

INSPIRATION

"There're winners. There're losers. And there are people who haven't discovered how to win. And all they need is some assistance. A little support. All they need is some insight. A different strategy. A plan of action. To make some adjustments. That will open the key to a whole new future for them." - Les Brown

THANK YOU

My life changing experience

By: Litzi Ruiz

Before services and probation

- I was not focused in my education and I constantly skipped school for fun.
- I was not engaged with my family.
- Abused of alcohol and drugs.

Skipping education

-When ditching school I went to my friends houses rather than focusing on my education.



- Unfortunately, I was a victim of peer pressure.
- In my mentality, my decisions were alright.

Family

-In that phase in my life, I cared more about my friends than my family.

-I believed that they were there for me more than my own loved ones.

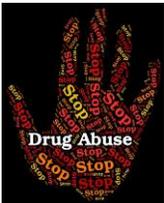


Substance abuse

-I wasn't aware that my actions and decisions were making me go the wrong directions. (using drugs and alcohol)

-Affected by peer pressure made me do choices that brought bad consequences in my life.

-Abusing of alcohol is one of the reasons why I am in probation.



Probation

-I was assigned rules such as: curfew, calling system, and report everywhere I go.

-It got me involved back in my education.

-It forced me to be good, but to see life different.

-Probation got me involved in Community Health Associates for my alcohol abuse and anger issues.

Values I learned

-While being in probation and in CHA services I started to value my education,family, and mostly my parents.

-I became aware that I was not going in the right direction in life.

-I got involved in community service, and that helped me to get involve with my community and work for fun at the Food Bank.

Community health associates & YAC

-At first, I wasn't happy for going into Community Health Associates for my anger and alcohol issues.

-CHA got me involved in Youth Advisory Council group (YAC) and that's when I realized.....

-That CHA was just helping me become a better person in life, school, and being more family oriented.

My Success story

-CHA & YAC has changed my life completely.

-I now understand how to be more patient and value my family, and my health from staying away from alcohol and managing my anger issues.

-If it wasn't for probation, YAC, & CHA I wouldn't be graduating early and looking forward for college.



Forever grateful

-Being in services and probation has helped me to stay clean, to be responsible, and to be grateful that I have a roof over my head, and a wonderful family that supports me. I am forever grateful for this life changing experience that made me value the little things in life I wasn't taking advantage of.