



Emerging Star Award Winner Ryleigh Frisbie

Now a college student with a full-time job and her sights set on becoming a nurse, Ryleigh Frisbie has experienced more loss than the average child. When her biological parents were unable to raise her and her brother, her grandparents adopted the siblings and the newly formed family moved to a small northern Michigan town. As an adolescent, Ryleigh immersed herself in a community of children raised by kinship and adoptive families, and at an early age took on a meaningful role as a peer mentor to other children struggling with the trauma of the circumstances surrounding parental separation.

Over the years, Ryleigh has developed into a persuasive advocate for helping to create safe and welcoming environments for youth who have been in foster care, adopted, or raised by relatives. Since 2015, she has become an outspoken and active youth advocate for the Adoptive Family Support Network. She's provided testimony during legislative advocacy events, promoted policy changes to improve the lives of kinship caregivers and their families at forums, and assisted support groups and training. She's facilitated youth activities for children at retreats and adoption celebrations, staffed childcare services at these gatherings, and facilitated informational tables at events focused on kinship care and adoption.

Ryleigh is no stranger to the Capitol where she travels with kinship care coalition members to talk about the need for programs such as kinship navigators and the kinship advisory council. Her voice continues to bring clarity to the role kinship families play in the informal child welfare system.

Back home and around the state, she remains an advocate for helping to create safe and welcoming environments for youth who have been in foster care, adopted, or raised by relatives. For youth from similar backgrounds, encountering a young person who "gets it" helps lessen feelings of shame.

Her nominator wrote: "I have had the honor to hear Ryleigh share her testimony to help advocate for changes needed in policy and practice to improve the lives of other Michigan kinship youth and families. Ryleigh has faced far more adversity in her childhood and as a young adult than most will ever experience, but her resilience has allowed her to channel those experiences as an advocate to impact change for other youth and families like her own."

Congratulations Ryleigh Frisbie!