

The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) Youth-Led, Youth-Driven, Youth Voice, Youth Power

“Young people play a very important role in uniting the Disability Community. They have the power and creativity to create change. And NYLN will support them in doing it.”

--Stacey Milbern, NYLN President

Introduction to NYLN

The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) is the first youth-led non-profit national disability organization for young people with disabilities. We empower all young people with disabilities to reach their maximum potential. NYLN is led by a staff (Executive Director, Development Specialist, Technical Support Specialist, and Linguistic Support Specialist) and the NYLN Governing Board (GB). The GB is the governing body for NYLN. The specific duties of the GB focus on mentoring and supporting local participants and carrying out Network activities.

NYLN is dedicated to providing leadership, educational, and advocacy opportunities to emerging leaders with disabilities. Specifically, NYLN:

- Promotes leadership development, education, employment, independent living, and health and wellness among young leaders representing the diversity of race, ethnicity and disability in the United States.
- Fosters the inclusion of young leaders with disabilities into all aspects of society at national, state and local levels.
- Communicates about issues important to youth with disabilities and the policies and practices that affect their lives.

Membership is free and is open to all young people with disabilities ages 16-28 as well as parents, professionals, and others committed to promoting the leadership of young people with disabilities. Registration for membership can be found on NYLN's website www.nyln.org.

NYLN Mission/Services

Mission Statement

The mission statement of NYLN reads as follows:

NYLN's mission is to promote youth leadership and education. We teach youth how to advocate. Our goal is to make sure that youth with disabilities have the chance to set and reach their own goals.

Teleconferences/Webcasts

NYLN holds teleconferences/webcasts. Participants may participate on the phone or on the Internet. The teleconferences/webcasts serve as trainings led by youth experts that are free to attend. NYLN teleconferences/webcasts provide the chance for youth with disabilities around the country to be connected. Participants have the opportunity to ask questions and receive more information on the particular teleconference/webcast topic.

Resource Consultants

Members of NYLN are valuable resources to their communities. The young leaders of NYLN are often invited to participate in boards and committees all over the country. NYLN members also frequently participate in their communities by giving public presentations in schools or at other community events. Additionally, there may be opportunities for NYLN members to be speakers at conferences.

NYLN Activities

National Youth Information Center

The NYLN also serves as a Youth Information Center. This is a national site for information. NYLN's website www.nyln.org provides information through the Clearinghouse page. Resources included on this page are those created by young people on their own or in teams.

Committee Activities

NYLN activities happen all year. These are led by our committees.

Accessibility Committee:

This committee creates public documents. These documents empower young people and are used for trainings all over the country. NYLN members are actively engaged in the process of creating these documents through research, writing, editing, and putting the documents in accessible format.

Advocacy Committee:

This committee hosts the NYLN teleconferences/webcasts. Young people from around the country can participate. NYLN members are actively engaged in various aspects of a teleconference/webcast including selecting the content of the teleconference/webcast, moderating the event, speaking for the event on the selected topics, making technical arrangements for the event, and advertising the event to the public.

Public Outreach Committee:

This committee produces the NYLN newsletter. NYLN newsletters are produced four times each year. NYLN members participate in all aspects of creating the newsletter including determining the newsletter's theme and article topics, writing articles/editorials, editing the newsletter, formatting the newsletter, and making the newsletter accessible. This team also works with other Youth Information Centers.

NYLN Publications

Newsletter

NYLN writes four newsletters each year which is primarily done by the Public Outreach Committee. The articles are written by NYLN members and young people. The NYLN newsletter includes features and stories about current events, personal profiles of young leaders, and opportunities around the country.

NYLN and KASA

NYLN works with KASA to make youth-to-youth information documents. KASA (Kids As Self-Advocates) is a program made up of young people, too. We work together to write about things that young people find important. So far we have made the following documents:

- Accessibility and Accommodations: Making opportunities accessible to all
- Respectful Disability Language: Here's what's up!
- Accessibility Checklist

One of NYLN's greatest accomplishments has been its constant commitment to making documents accessible to young people with disabilities to allow full inclusion in valuable information to empower them to be active members of their communities in all aspects of life.

Empowerment Resources

National Clearinghouse

The Clearinghouse is a place where young people with disabilities may find valuable information. There are resources for:

- Education
- Employment
- Healthcare
- Disability History/Disability Culture
- Advocacy
- Policy
- Youth-made Materials (this includes links to websites, blogs, and more!)

Conclusion

NYLN President Stacey Milbern makes a statement that goes to the heart of NYLN's mission and work to empower young people with disabilities across the nation, "Young people play a vital role in uniting the Disability Community. They have the power and creativity to create change. And NYLN will support them in doing it."