

# Youth News

August 2021

Educational, Motivational & Inspirational Stories



**Foster to Adopt  
One Girl's Story  
to  
Finding Her  
Forever Home**



**Youth News** magazine is a way to celebrate the good news of youth. *Youth News* provides fostered, adopted, kinship cared and mentored youth with real on-the-job training skills. Youth are paid as they learn how to produce this publication for the community. Donations for ad space is how we pay youth in training. The "Dove" logo is a symbol we use as a message of good news. Our goal is to bring educational, inspirational and motivational stories to encourage people to open their hearts and support youth.

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# Foster to Adopt, One Girl's Story to Finding Her Forever Home

Written By: Sarah Holcomb

One of the most common types of adoptions is foster care adoption, when a child is adopted from foster care. As one of the least costly adoption types, it is an attractive option particularly for foster families that have bonded with a child. 16 years ago, Laura Avery of Las Vegas, Nevada adopted her daughter Vanessa from the foster community she was so active in. Laura and her husband already had a biological son and felt the calling to adopt after being touched by the story of an adopted young girl they knew through work. Laura had been volunteering as a tutor for an organization that served foster youth, and one of the foster families reached out to her about Vanessa. After several visitations, Laura and her husband were able to welcome the then 4 year old Vanessa into their family through adoption. Vanessa adjusted easily into her new home and family, and Laura describes her as always being a happy, fun girl. Now 20 years old, Vanessa says her heart goes out to the many children still in the system and that have aged out of it.

With faith being such a large part of their lives, both Vanessa and her mother feel that she was chosen



specifically for their family. According to Vanessa, “it’s a blessing to be out of the system so early...and to have a good family and an older brother is awesome!”

# Missing Fathers

Written By: Emanuel Emelike



**Guy Powell**

The idea of abandonment can be traumatizing for both the victim of the abandonment and the perpetrator. The effects that it introduces to the family can be devastating. I interviewed a mental health expert to further my own knowledge on the topic of missing fathers and to initiate this discussion. Guy Powell is a mental health expert who utilizes his YouTube platform to address this important issue. According to Mr. Powell, the root of this issue which is so prominent within our communities can often be related to the mental health status of individuals involved. Parental mental assessments can be used to determine if there is a causation factor and how to improve on research based studies in order to provide a better solution. Emotional attachments or the lack thereof between the parent and the child may also contribute to the instability within the Familial dynamics. Familial bond and relationship-building can be a key factor in long-term growth and sustainability. Mr. Powell specifically addressed the issue of avoidant

personalities and its relation to the parental, child familial dynamics. The child may be in a situation where the parent is found to be neglecting or avoiding responsibilities. The parental presentation of a stable home can assist the child in the development of a healthier outlook. Influential factors such as drugs and alcohol may strain relationships and may contribute to other issues within the home setting. Abuse of all stages within the home setting, discord, resentment and disinterest may also contribute to the issues within the familial construct. Mentorship involvement at an early stage in the process may prove to be beneficial to the relationship building process. Strong emotional attachment between the parent and the child may facilitate in sustaining relationships within the familial construct. Therapy and educational awareness on mental health is necessary to provide an alternative to the missing father behavioral pattern.







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# Youth News



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**LaToria Kern**  
Founder/Publisher/

I am deeply honored to work with these amazing people from our youngest writers to our retirees, we are all committed to educating our communities about the vast need for people to become foster, adoptive parents and mentors. In this issue we're talking about *Missing Fathers*. Fathers we need you more than words can say. Fathers who are there everyday 365!! We salute you.

Thank you for supporting our cookie dough fundraiser. From city-to-city and coast-to-coast, you said "I Support Youth"

One of our team members may call you to ask for support. Please **"Answer the Call."**

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Thank you,

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# Mental Health Matters and That's Reality!!!



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117,000 children and teens are waiting to be adopted. The number of children in foster care nationwide increased 2.3% this year to 437,465. Making it a figure that has risen every year since 2012. Studies indicate that one out of every four youth who age-out of foster care will end up in a homeless shelter within three years.

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# *Comfort Calls Initiative*

child, with supervision from the caregiver. Comfort Calls provide the birth parent with peace of mind knowing that their child is safe and being cared for, which establishes trust with the caregiver. The calls also serve to ease the transition for children by allowing them to stay in contact with their birth parent. Perhaps most important, Comfort Calls allow the caregiver to be a source of support and encouragement for both the birth parent and the child, which has been shown to positively impact permanency outcomes for children in foster care.

Written By: Sarah Holcomb

A new initiative within the foster care system is gaining more attention and support as research indicates that it expedited reunification and reduces the trauma and anxiety experienced during the foster process. The Comfort Calls initiative provides the opportunity for birth parents or family of origin and caregivers to connect with each other directly, providing a support system for foster children and their families during a stressful and difficult time. Typically the process involves the caregiver calling the birth parent upon a foster child's arrival to their home to learn about any important information such as health conditions, personality traits, and favorite activities. Many times these calls also involve the birth parent communicating directly with their





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# Youth Spotlight

Written By: Sarah Holcomb

This month's Youth Spotlight features Vanessa Avery from Las Vegas, Nevada. Vanessa is 20 years old and is a full-time student who also works part-time. With a passion for the visual arts, she is studying entertainment production which she hopes to one day pursue as a career. She has even done camera and lighting work for events at her church, and her faith is a big part of her life. Having a gift for creativity, Vanessa is also a talented drawer and dancer, having competed for eight years in contemporary dance. She says that dancing taught her how to be disciplined and self-driven, and even inspired her career aspirations as she learned that being on stage isn't the only creative path one can take in the visual and performing arts realm. Inspired by her friends that tour with live entertainment companies, Vanessa hopes to one day visit and maybe even work in Japan. She believes that her education in stage design will open up many opportunities for her, including potentially interior design, and she is passionate about sharing her love of the visual arts with others. Vanessa's biggest goal is to encourage those around her to pursue their dreams and goals and overcome personal obstacles and challenges, just as she has done. Inspired by a quote from *Game of Thrones* actress Emilia Clarke, she says "I have my own trials and tribulations but I don't let them get to me. I think it's important to know that life is short and sometimes we need to laugh until we make it."



Vanessa



# Senior Citizens: End-of-Life Care

Written By: Ronald Neubauer

Last month I wrote about celebrating and honoring senior citizens. This month I will highlight hospice care, which helps patients and their loved ones deal with the end-of-life.

Hospice is medical care for patients with a terminal illness -- expected to live no more than six more months as determined by a physician -- when curative care is stopped and care focuses on symptom and pain management; helping the patient live as well as possible with as high a quality of life as possible. A team of medical professionals and volunteers address physical, psychosocial, and spiritual needs of the patient and loved ones. Importantly, hospice is paid for by Medicare and/or Medicaid, and is usually covered by private insurance. Hospice can be in a hospital or other care facility, as well as at a private home. Hospice volunteers can talk with, read to, or play music for patients; hold their hand; or just be a caring and comforting presence. For home hospice patients, volunteers support family caregivers by providing them a respite while they take care of necessary errands or need an emotional break. After the patient passes, volunteers can



assist professionals in the bereavement process for loved ones.

No One Dies Alone programs date back at least to 2001. Volunteers provide compassionate companionship to hospice patients in a hospital or other care facility to substitute, as best as possible, when there are no loved ones or friends.

**NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT** for the **ARTS**





# National Exercise with Your Child Week



Written By: Melanie Rush

Each year, National Exercise with Your Child Week is observed during the first full week of August. It provides an opportunity for parents and guardians to bond with their children while promoting physical activities and other elements of a healthy lifestyle. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends children ages 6 through 17 years old have at least [1 hour of moderate-to-vigorous exercise](#) each day. During these 60 minutes, the CDC encourages children to engage in exercise that includes a mix of aerobic activity (like walking and swimming), muscle-strengthening (push-ups, climbing), and bone strengthening (think: kickboxing and jumping).

This year, families can observe National Exercise with Your Child Week by adopting fun activities that

work up a sweat.

Here are some ideas to mark the annual event:

1. Turn on your favorite music playlist to get everyone up and dancing each night before dinner
2. Grab a ball and head to your local park to play soccer or basketball
3. Take advantage of the free parks, playgrounds (monkey bars, anyone?), and hiking trails in your area
4. Set a time each day for a group walk around the neighborhood
5. When safe and possible, opt to walk, bike, or skate instead of using a car for transportation.



## *The Parkey Group*

Individuals, couples, and teens within the community, face to face services when desired, as well as anyone in Kansas, Missouri, and Nevada with telehealth services.

- Trauma informed therapeutic
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# Happiness



**Make everyday your  
"Happiness  
Happens Day"**

# happens!!!

Written By: Keisha Mitchell

I dare you to make this month your happiest month yet! August is national "Happiness happens month!" When I was a child attending middle school, my assistant principal would always say "make it a great day or not, the choice is yours!" Wow the power that words hold. We actually have the choice to make today a great day, so why not make it our best day? Haruki Murakami once said "Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional." I now carry that statement with me everywhere that I go. Simply speaking he's letting us know that we will always experience some sort of pain at any given moment, but it's up to us how we deal with that pain. Just because you had a bad start to your morning, doesn't mean that your night has to be bad as well. No! Choose happiness this month. Actually I dare you to choose happiness for the rest of the year. That's right, let's make these final four months of 2021 our best months. Always remember that the sun shines after the rain falls! I love each and every one of you. Happiness happens!



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# August 9th National Book Lover's Day

By: Ronald Neubae

This month I learned that August 9th is National Book Lover's Day (celebrated in the United States on that date every year). National Book Lover's Day is not only for bibliophiles, it is to encourage all people to celebrate the importance of literacy and the joy of reading. There is some debate about when International Tongue Twister Day is celebrated: [whenisholiday.com](http://whenisholiday.com) indicates the second Wednesday of November; [thespruce.com](http://thespruce.com) indicates August 22nd. For the purpose of this August article I'm going with August. Tongue twisters are a great way to entertain children while building verbal language skills. So, my two prompts for August: National Book Lover's Day and International Tongue Twisters Day.

What I like about writing to prompts is that prompts can lead to surprising places. These two prompts have led me to recall the joy my kids and I shared reading Dr. Seuss tongue twister books. As Dr. Seuss might say, *Oh The Places You'll Go!* Two popular Dr. Seuss tongue twister books are *Oh Say Can You Say* and *Fox in Socks*. One example from *Fox in Socks*:



“When a fox is in the bottle where the tweetle beetles battle with their paddles in a puddle on a noodle-eating poodle, THIS is what they call.....a tweetle beetle noodle poodle bottled paddled muddled duddled fuddled wuddled fox in socks, sir!”

I'm not sure I can remember many activities more fun than reading these tongue twister books with my kids. Read on!



# Crowdsourcing - a powerful platform connecting people globally

By Paula Margus

Crowdsourcing (also known as ‘open innovation’) is the practice of utilizing the wisdom of a group for a common goal. It is best applied when attempting to solve complex problems in an innovative way or streamline intricate processes (Jacquelyn White, July 2019, TheStreet.com). This collection of information, opinions, or work from a group of people is usually sourced via the Internet. Although the history and uses of crowdsourcing (crowd + outsourcing) dates back to 1714, this platform gained wide popularity with the emergence of e-commerce, social media and the smartphone culture.

The growing interest in crowdsourcing continues to increase connectivity between people across the globe. The prevalence of crowdsourcing in our lives may not be fully realized. Uber, which pairs available drivers with people who need rides, is an example of crowdsourced transportation. The GPS app Waze provides consumers with more value over competitors by crowdsourcing traffic-specific information such as traffic jams, road hazards and police radar hotspots. Businesses are turning to crowdsourcing to perform tasks more quickly and



## Power of the Crowd

increase efficiency with larger groups of people who have specialized skill sets unavailable inside the company.

Questions or tasks are put out in the open to a large group of people to receive input for the sake of innovation. The crowd can be made up of consumers, citizens, entrepreneurs, start-ups, specialists, or enthusiasts. Objectives for the crowds range from citizen opinions to customer engagement (e.g. ideas for a new logo design), product development and brand awareness, connecting talent, and problem solving. The Netflix docu-series *Diagnosis*, portrays fascinating real life accounts of harnessing the internet and social media via crowdsourcing for diagnosing unusual unsolved medical cases. For more details, see the article ‘*Diagnosis*’ column that uses crowdsourcing leaps to Netflix,

[Click Here:](#)

<https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-tv-2691145c041f4569a50e9d3132281503>

# Celebrating Our Seniors

Written By: Samantha Codes

National Senior Citizen's Day is celebrated on August 21st as a way of honoring the contributions of the most mature members of our society. It presents an opportunity to show a senior member of your community just how much they are appreciated. Here are a few great ways to show some love:

- Check in on a senior family member or neighbor just to see how they're doing. Many seniors don't get out as much as they used to and really look forward to playing a game of cards, looking at old photos, or chatting on the phone.
- Volunteer to run errands or do chores for a senior in your community. Many seniors would welcome help with their grocery shopping, yard work, and odd jobs around the house. Helping a senior learn how to use technology is also extremely needed if you're the patient type.



- Use your special talents or hobbies (singing, dancing, knitting, playing an instrument, etc.) to entertain seniors in local nursing homes or online.

As COVID winds down there will be more and more opportunities to connect with our seniors and make sure they feel appreciated everyday. In the meantime, websites like [volunteermatch.com](https://www.volunteermatch.com) post some ways you can give back virtually.

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# Little Women Movie Review

in meaningful things and decided to pursue teaching. Jo was the second oldest sister who dreamt of being a writer and living in New York. She never wished to get married, which made her character somewhat relatable for female readers back then. The second youngest was Beth, a shy and sweet young girl who was loved by her family and the people who took the time to get to know her. And lastly there was

Amy, the youngest of the four. She was the sister that represented the most realistic woman. She had a dream of becoming a painter but knew that to have stability in her life she needed to marry rich and give up that part of herself.

Together, these four sisters go through love and loss as they grow into becoming their individual selves. Even when their lives headed in totally different directions, they always made sure to come back together when they needed one another. What gave *Little Women* the “classic” label was that girls from every age could relate to these four young women. Whether they’re like Amy and wish to live a realistic, comfortable life or like Jo, wanting to crush the patriarchy, girls get inspired by the four little women and feel that a part of them was heard through their stories.

Written By: Caia Reese

*As some of you may or may not know, August 1st celebrates National Sisters Day.*

What better way to honor this day than to bring back one of the sisterhood classics: *Little Women*. This movie was originally a book written by Louisa May Alcott in 1868. Recently, however, this age-old classic was brought to the big screens. Through the hard work of the director, cast, and crew, the story of Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy continues to live in young girls’ hearts today

The story follows four sisters and their journey from adolescence to adulthood. The oldest sister, Meg, was a woman who longed for luxury in her early years. It wasn’t until she became an adult that she found worth

# Luca Movie Review

Written By: Sam Cooper

*Luca*, with its small-scale story, original premise, and unique art style is like a breath of fresh sea air. It has a distinctive art style. It doesn't strive for realistic textures, characters, or backgrounds. Instead, it's stylized, cartoony, yet soft. It stands out for all the right reasons.

Set in 1950s Italy, the movie follows Luca, a boy sea monster, who lives in the Italian Riviera. He meets another sea monster boy named Alberto who convinces him to explore the surface with him. When dry, the sea monsters assume human form.

The boys run away to the nearest human town, PortoRosso. There, they join town misfit Guilia in her plan to win the Portorosso Cup Triathlon and use the prize money to buy a Vespa. Though the film is about two boys finding themselves and enjoying the summer, it can easily be a metaphor for two boys in love. Luca and

Alberto develop a close relationship and Alberto gets jealous when Luca starts spending more time with Guilia.

Like many children's films, *Luca* is about acceptance and



learning how differences make us special, but this film does it... particularly well.

Guilia's father, for instance, born with one arm, is still a successful fisherman. It's little things like physical disabilities, different family situations, and different relationships portrayed as "normal," especially from studios as accessible as Pixar, that make it easier for children to understand and find their place in the world.

My only complaint is that this movie should have been released in theaters. I would have loved to see it on the big screen.





**Ben Nighthorse Campbell**  
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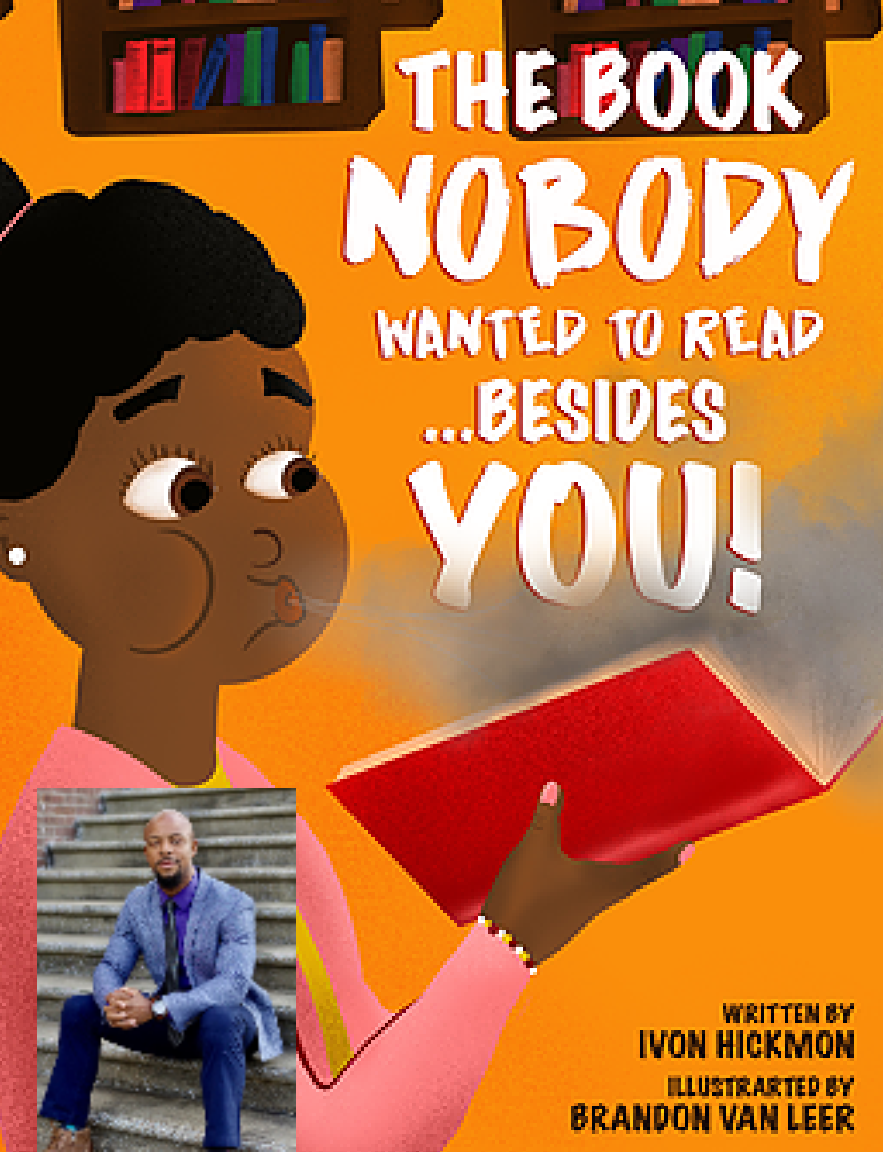
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**Foster! Adopt! Mentor!**



# The Book Nobody wanted to Read Besides You!

This beautiful story captures the need for inclusivity and emotional intelligence. Readers are introduced to the protagonist, as she shows empathy and compassion towards our book character. By definition, inclusion is the action or state of including or being included within a group. Inclusion must be taught and fought for. Equipping children is essential for this life's journey. Emotional intelligence is a set of emotional and social skills that influence the way we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges, and use emotional information in an effective and meaningful way. This dynamic story teaches your children a proven, practical tactic to develop emotional intelligence skills. After reading this story, children will be empowered to love and embrace themselves fully and gain awareness of their emotional state.

**About the Author:** The youngest son out of three boys to military parents, Ivon found his dreams of playing among the NFL greats were closer than he'd ever imagine. Ivon's football career journeyed from "last man" on the roster to earning his football scholarship with honors and being selected as team captain and MVP.

A true "girl dad," Ivon spends hours visiting both his daughters' schools, cultivating children through the power of reading. These visits propelled Ivon to release his debut children's book, *The Book Nobody Wanted to Read...Besides You*, a fun and silly book that introduces children to emotional intelligence and inclusion.

# Message from the *Editor-in-Chief*

I am working 3 jobs (2 full-time positions and 1 part-time) all serving child welfare/foster care system reform.

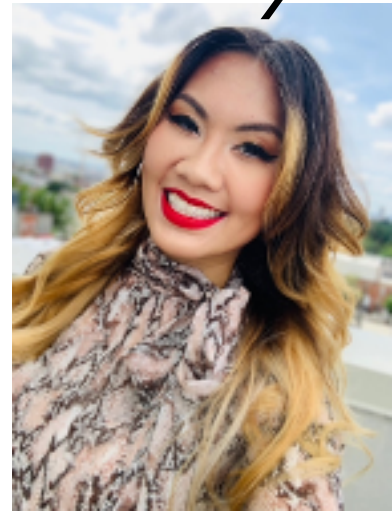
Taking on an additional position as an Acting Supervisor in another division within my Department, alongside running my own Ombuds office seemed like a handful but I'm fortunate enough to have found my calling. Leveraging lived experience and elevating youth voices within the child welfare/foster care system has truly been my calling.

When you say yes, make sure your "yes" aligns with every fiber of your being. It won't feel like work. This relates to fostering, mentoring, volunteer, or paid work.

It is messages like this that make me feel like I'm moving the needle towards systems change.

"Loney in my journey as a Social Work Child Welfare Professional career I have only come across a few Social Workers like you who have known struggle, loss, defeat and have battled their way out from the depths of suffering and turned their lived experience into compassion, empathy, gentlest and a genuine loving concern for humanity and the clinical skills to make lasting systems change. Thank you for always being there for our RB21 youth in Washington County, Maryland"

I am so fortunate to find success in my passion. May you find yours.



**Loney Nguyen**

*THE THINGS YOU ARE  
PASSIONATE ABOUT ARE NOT  
RANDOM...THEY ARE YOUR  
CALLING.*

-Fabienne Fredrickson-

**About the Editor-in-Chief:** Ms. Loney Nguyen pronounced (Lonnie) is a licensed clinical social worker, professional model, and servant leader. Loney is the Director of Programs for WHALER's Creation and serves as Editor in Chief of Youth News magazine published by FAMILY Arts @ WHALER's Creation and Maryland's appointed Foster Youth Ombuds. An expert in youth engagement, she has over 13 years of lived and professional child welfare experience in Maryland, and 7 years supervisory experience in the District of Columbia. An international pageant Queen, she was crowned Miss Baltimore United States, 2019 and Miss Vietnam DC, 2014 respectively. When she is not competing in pageants, she volunteers her time as a local/national pageant judge, coach, and teaches life skills & etiquette classes to encourage a positive self image that ignites the Royal Queen/King in youth and adults.





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Dear Lillie, my husband, just spent the very last of our savings on cryptocurrency. He has been hearing this fact from me for about two years. I just found out that he has spent over \$11,000 on this “air money”. I am so mad I am ready to leave him. What should I do? - Mad Money!

Dear Mad Money, Wow, I am not too sure about this cryptocurrency...but it was an investment. What will you do if his \$11,000 turns into \$11 million? Don't be so quick to leave . Do your research, it may not be a bad thing. Hang in there. Wishing your Mad Money turns into happy money, Lillie

Dear Lillie, I attended my daughter's wedding a few weeks ago and it was one of the most beautiful weddings I've ever seen. The wedding party looked amazing, the minister's words were heartfelt and the food was amazing. My only problem is my daughter, the bride is 40 years younger than her husband, and her husband is unemployed. She has an executive position with a major company. I tried to stop the wedding with everything I had in me, but my daughter went on with the wedding. **Concerned Mom**

Dear Concerned Mom, That is a lot for any mother to handle. You said her “father-grandfather” figure fiance is not working. Well, I hope that means he is financially independent. Just because he is not working does not mean he does not have lots of money . In spite of you trying to stop this wedding, your daughter still got married to him. Let's wish them the best and hope she made a wise choice for a husband. If he makes her happy, be happy for her. **Keep smiling**

# "Ask Lillie"

If you are in need of some good sound advice from a straight talker, send your questions to **"Ask Lillie"** your answer may be published



**Submit your question to:**  
**admin@whalers-creation.us**

The views and opinions expressed in "Ask Lillie" are the sole views and opinion of Lillie, and may not reflect the view and or opinion of Youth News, staff, volunteers, interns, donors or contributors.



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Meet our  
**TEAM**

## GET TO KNOW OUR TEAM

### Youth Under 21



**Liam**, a photographer / host of 60 Second Sports Talk on KFAM Youth Radio. He is a recent high school graduate with dreams of becoming a professional sports anchor or sports attorney.

# Foster



**Lenna** is a young writer living in a crowded city. Though she is a part of society's youth, she writes to show others what is important to the future generations and what our future world will look like. Lenna values education and strives to inform others on important topics relatable to the youthful audience.

# Adopt



**Tolu** is an African writer, who uses her voice to advocate for change. She writes articles, poetry and screenplays alongside finishing her first novel to be published Spring 2022. When she is not writing, she loves fashion and cloud watching.



Jordan, enjoys running, sports, and writing. As of now, she is not sure what career path she wants to pursue, but writing and academic maybe apart of her future.

# Mentor



# Meet our TEAM

## GET TO KNOW OUR TEAM

### Contributing Writers over 21



Keisha Mitchell is an inspirational author, writer, poet, and creator. She self-published her first book titled, DO BLACK LIVES REALLY MATTER? at the age of 20. Keisha chooses her words wisely as she believes that her greatest power comes out through the use of words. Her favorite line to use, “What you speak is what you seek.” As a registered nursing student, Keisha is dedicated to using her voice to advocate for improving health and wellness within the minority community.



Paula Margus, is a Quality Program Specialist, is always looking for opportunities to make improvements. She applies this to her personal life as well and enjoys helping others to improve their lives. She is very involved in her community and is passionate about youth advocacy, social justice and equality; animal rescue/adoption and health self-advocacy. Paula is a long-time resident of VA.



Sarah Holcomb is a Human Resources professional and a graduate student studying organizational psychology. With a passion for personal development, she lives by the mantra “I never dreamed of success, I worked for it” (Estee Lauder). In her spare time, she enjoys staying active and riding her electric scooter around Washington, D.C., which she calls home.



Samantha Cooper is a 20-something writer living in the DMV area. She runs a blog, “Scoop’s Animation Corner” where she reviews animated movies and TV shows. She is also the co-runner of the YouTube channel, “Chamber of Spoilers.”



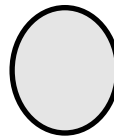
Ronald Neubauer retired in February of 2018 after being an attorney in the Navy Judge Advocate General’s Corps for 21 years and then a Defense Department civilian for 20 years. He specialized in international law and was privileged to work in 38 countries. In addition to volunteering as an editor and writer for WHALER’s Creation, he also volunteers with Inova Fairfax Hospital and Compassus Hospice and Palliative Care. His hobbies include playing guitar, sailing, and reading.



Adria Kinney loves reading and writing and is passionate about expanding educational opportunities for underserved youth. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology, a Master’s degree in International Education, and resides in Washington, D.C. where she works as Program Officer for FHI 360.



Christa Cooke is a software engineer with a keen interest in technology, LGBTQ+ issues, politics, and the intersections between the three. She is an aspiring writer and avid sci-fi and fantasy reader, with a dream of one day publishing a novel of her own. Christa has spent much of her twenties traveling; she’s now chosen to make Washington D.C. her home, close to her chosen family.



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