

Foster Care Alumni Corner: A Reflection on Their Experiences

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In 2008, the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP) formally launched an initiative to engage alumni of the foster care system. The alums participate as trainers, co-trainers, panelists, curriculum developers and consultants within the training program. After years of observing the culture and operations of the OCWTP, we asked them to reflect on what they've learned about themselves and the training program.

“What have you learned about yourselves?”

Lamar: “My personal experiences in foster care have a huge impact on the overall success of the training”

Arlene: “I learn as much from trainees as they learn from me”

Amanda: “Trainees constantly comment about the wisdom and maturity they see in me during training. That's very validating”

Olena: “Although initially unsure, I now love training caregivers and caseworkers. It is refreshing and inspiring to see them want to make a difference in the lives of children/youth”

Crystal: “I've had to go through some bad days in order to finally get to some of the best days of my life and be happy with the person I've become. Nice to know my experiences count in the training room”

Jamole: “It makes sense to me to train caregivers and social workers together on youth issues. I like knowing everyone is on the same page and can discuss meaningful strategies that can help youth”

Dauntea: “My ability to accept and value constructive criticism has helped me become a more effective trainer”

Adrian: “I enjoy training much more than I ever thought I would. So far, it's been a great journey”

“What have you learned about the OCWTP?”

Lamar: “It's a great advocate for the needs of children and youth in care”

Arlene: “It encourages consumer feedback (evaluation) which is necessary to identify strengths and needs within the training system”

Amanda: “It recognizes child welfare practice is ever changing and promotes workshops that keep up with those changes”

Olena: “It values the viewpoints and experiences of foster alumni and youth in care”

Crystal: “It is genuinely passionate about the delivery of quality material, and values youth input”

Jamole: “It recognizes and permits differences in training styles”

Dauntea: “It promotes training excellence and provides adequate support for developing qualified trainers”

Adrian: “It stresses proper preparation of trainers and emphasizes evidence-based research in curriculum content”

Collectively these alumni trainers appreciate their OCWTP engagements and they view the training program as fertile ground for promoting their professional growth and development. They rely upon “seasoned” trainers and OCWTP staff to mentor and coach them through their training experiences, so keep those opportunities coming!