Keynote Speaker:

Dani Wilson is the Youth Engagement Specialist on the Missouri SOC-CESS (System of Care Community for Early Signs & Symptoms) learning collaborative between the Department of Mental Health and SAMHSA. They received their Masters in Public Health from Saint Louis University in May 2018 and began working with SOC-CESS to advocate for youth voice and provide technical assistance on youth engagement at the sites involved.
Missouri Youth Leadership Forum: What is That?  
Rachel Rackers & Claudia Browner  
Join us for an information session about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF). There will be an overview discussing what MO-YLF is all about. Then, you will get to hear firsthand from alumni who have gone through the forum and their experiences during and after MO-YLF.

Transition Jeopardy  
Amey Bowman, Kristin Donze and Amy Siekerman  
Test your employment and college transition knowledge in a fun game of Jeopardy for students. We will discuss different types of jobs, college knowledge and tips and tricks to get and keep a job during this fun and interactive game.

Be Unstoppable: Self-Advocacy in a Roadblocked World  
Elizabeth Rajchart  
In this session we will learn to identify obstacles at school, work, and home, brainstorm accommodations to create a more accessible environment, and practice advocating for ourselves with others. By learning the important skill of self advocacy, we can be much more successful in every area of our lives.”

Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Services  
Amey Bowman, Kristin Donze and Amy Siekerman  
Learn about Vocational Rehabilitation and how we can work with students in their transition from high school to employment, training or college. We will discuss changes to services and how to get involved with VR and Pre-ETS services.

Creating a Resume  
Becky Romine  
This is an excellent opportunity for youth to learn how to organize their personal and professional information, so it can be easily shared with prospective employers. In this session, you will begin to create a resume and simplify the process of filling out a job application by using a pocket resume tool.
Tools For Life Summit
Session Descriptions

Assistive Technology and Transition: A Combination for Success
Scout Merry
It is important that students with disabilities and school districts understand how assistive technology fits into the transition planning process. This presentation offers information about when and how assistive technology should be considered during the transition process.

Bullying: What you can do!
Lisa Bowles
This session will explain the different types of bullying and what real life actions to take for different types of bullying. It will also define the role of helpful bystander.

Centers for Independent Living - Your Past, Present and Future
Jenny Cowart & Melinda Cardone
This session will explore the history of the independent living movement and what it has meant to people with disabilities as well as discussing how Centers for Independent Living support youth and adults now. Learn how they can help you to prepare for your future!

Transition Issues Under Title II of the ADA and Section 504
Claire Fitzgerald
This session covers student’s rights and responsibilities under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act,(Title II) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) as students prepare to transition from high school to post-secondary education, and the role of the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights has in enforcing the laws that can impact students during transition.
About the Presenters

Keynote Speaker
Dani Wilson is the Youth Engagement Specialist on the Missouri SOC-CESS (System of Care Community for Early Signs & Symptoms) learning collaborative between the Department of Mental Health and SAMHSA. They received their master’s in public health from Saint Louis University in May 2018 and began working with SOC-CESS to advocate for youth voice and provide technical assistance on youth engagement at the sites involved.
As a young LGBTQIA+ professional diagnosed with depression, anxiety and Borderline Personality Disorder, Dani has had a wealth of experience navigating a society that seems to be working against those who stray from the norm. They entered graduate school with the desire to impact mental health policy for youth and have spent their professional career advocating for policy changes that elevates the perspective of youth with lived experience.

Amy Bowen is an Assistant Director of Transition and 511 Services with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation. She has over 20 years in the field of disability related and transition services. Amy earned her bachelor’s degree at the University of Missouri-Columbia and her Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling at Arkansas State University. She is also a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

Kristin Donze is an Assistant Director of Transition and 511 Services with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation. She has over 20 years in the field of disability related and transition services. Kristin earned her bachelor’s degree at the University of Central Missouri and her Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling at West Virginia University. She is also a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

Amy Siekerman is an Assistant Director of Transition and 511 Services with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation. She has over 13 years in the field of disability related and transition services. Amy earned her bachelor’s degree in Psychology at Truman State University and her master’s in social work at Saint Louis University. She is also a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the State of Missouri.

Melinda Cardone is the Executive Director of Independent Living Resource Center, Inc. in Jefferson City, MO. She has spent the last twelve years working in Centers for Independent Living advocating for and supporting persons with disabilities. Prior to working with Centers for Independent Living she developed and provided programs for youth as Membership/Marketing Director at Girl Scouts-Heart of Missouri Council. Melinda has a BA in Psychology from Columbia College and currently participates in the Cole County Youth Transitions Team.
Jennifer Cowart is a Youth Specialist with the Independent Living Resource Center, Inc. Jenny has also served as an MPACT Mentor for more than a decade.

Elizabeth Rajchart is a disability rights and accessibility advocate, performance photographer, and disability portraiture photographer from St. Louis, Missouri. Elizabeth has been an educator on disability rights since childhood, first teaching disability etiquette in elementary school, later giving school-wide lectures to her middle school teachers, and eventually becoming a Crisis Intervention Team speaker and trainer for the St. Louis City and County police. Her experience with having to advocate for herself and her mental and physical illnesses since childhood have given her decades of experience and a unique perspective on the importance of self-advocacy. As a disabled photographer, Elizabeth’s passion of art accessibility and arts representation led her to her latest specialization of disability portraiture, her goal to reach other people in her community and capture their inner beauty, strength, and uniqueness. Elizabeth has covered a range of productions, including local bands, pole dancing showcases, professional dance teams, major stadium tours, and local and international drag shows. Most recently, Elizabeth was hired as the Official Photographer for The National Disability Theatre, the first national professional theatre fully run by people with disabilities. She will begin her work with them at their first production in late 2019.

Claudia Browne is the executive director for the GCD and has been involved with the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum for thirteen years.

Rachel Rackers is a disability program specialist for the GCD and the new coordinator for the annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum.

Claire Fitzgerald has been an attorney with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Kansas City Enforcement Office, since 2001. OCR is a Federal civil rights enforcement agency responsible for investigating and seeking resolution of complaints alleging discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability (including complaints involving transition issues), where the alleged discrimination could constitute a violation of one of the six Federal laws. OCR also provides technical assistance to individuals, schools, and others regarding the requirements of the laws OCR enforces. Ms. Fitzgerald has traveled throughout the region in the course of investigating complaints and providing technical assistance presentations. She has a bachelor’s degree in business management and Computer Information Systems from Park University and her law degree is from the University of Denver.
Becky Romine is from Birch Tree and is a MU Pre-ETS Specialist. She also has certification in services for students with visual impairments.

Lisa Bowles is a Regional Coordinator for Missouri Parents Act and provides training and information to families in Northwestern Missouri. Like many of MPACT’s employees, Lisa has a child with a learning disability and is motivated by a deep empathy for parents who struggle with the special education process.

Scout Merry recently joined the team at Missouri Assistive Technology after nearly 10 years at Services for Independent Living (SIL) in Columbia, where he oversaw the Access Services Department, which became the “go-to” assistive technology and access modification resource in Mid-Missouri. Scout has also been a frequent presenter on assistive technology topics, including being invited to present at the Power Up Conference multiple times. Scout graduated from the University of California-Davis and has also worked as an early childhood educator and social worker.  Outside of work, Scout is a member of the Recreational Trail Board for the MO Department of Natural Resources and heads up the Sustainability team for Roots and Blues and BBQ, Columbia’s largest music festival.
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