

Youth of the Year Candidate - Meet Arianna:

"A lot has happened in my life, but the Club has always been there for me. When I was about 8-years-old, I went on a trip with my grandparents and when we returned home I found my mother in the garage attempting suicide. I was the one to save her life and have been living with my grandparents since then. I've struggled with what happened and often blame myself. When I began coming to the Club I quickly formed a relationship with Rayna, a staff member. She was one of many people I was able to open up to and she helped me realize that my mother's suicide attempt was not my fault and it wasn't something I could control.

Difficult events didn't end with my mother. Three days after my 13th birthday my best friend was murdered by his girlfriend. Once again, I felt guilt and blamed myself for what happened. I thought a lot about different consequences if I had not invited him to a party, maybe he would still be here. Once again the Club was there for me during a time I really struggled.

I feel like I have basically grown up at the Club. It's always felt like a second home filled with people who care about me. Because of the encouragement I found at the Club I've gotten into other things. At school I'm in Show Choir, Jazz Choir and regular choir. I have developed the confidence to give speeches and enjoy public speaking for fun. I'm always the first to have my hand up in class and am often the brightest in the room. This year I gave my first solo in Show Choir. My voice is the first thing you hear. Growing up at the Boys & Girls Club inspired me to apply for a job here after completing the Workforce Development program. Now I have a whole new group of coworkers that also support me and make me feel like I have purpose.

Though I'm only a freshman in high school, I have already started narrowing my options for the future. I want to pursue something in law enforcement or music. It's exciting to think about the future and I know that the Club will continue to be there to support my decisions. Some people say friends are the family you choose, but I feel like the Club chose me. Through the Boys & Girls Club I have gained more confidence, made better choices for my life and have plans for the future. All the people in the Club have had some impact on my life whether they know it or not. They are all a part of my family and I'm thankful to have them. Because of the Boys & Girls Club I'm doing great things!"