



As of June 23, 2023

## 2023 Youth Program

The youth program's primary purpose is to provide an environment in which everyone feels accepted and valued. We offer a fun atmosphere, age-appropriate information about TS, and – most importantly – opportunities to build friendships.

### Children are grouped by age and whether or not they have Turner syndrome.

- Ages 4-7 without TS and those with TS who have not completed Kindergarten.
- Ages 8-18 years old who do not have TS and have not graduated high school.
- Those with TS who completed Kindergarten, grades 1 and 2.
- Those with TS who completed grades 3, 4, and 5.
- Those with TS who completed grades 6, 7, and 8.
- Those with TS who completed grades 9, 10, 11 and going into 12.

### Guest Speakers

The following speakers will support the youth program with age-appropriate discussions.



**Mira Blumen** - Creator of *Be Your Best Butterfly Coaching*, will review and discuss common strengths and challenges some tweens/teens with TS have. She'll offer some activities that encourage them to feel proud of who they are.



**Mira Dessy, NE**, nutrition educator and The Ingredient Guru, Mira is one of the favorite presenters in the youth program. This year, Mira will be helping children and teens create an "Envision Health" vision board which will be conversational and fun.



**Mara Gittess, MA LPC**, will discuss feelings through a question-and-answer type setting.



**Dean Mooney, PhD**, school psychologist and non-verbal learning disorder expert, will talk with the young people without TS about their experiences of having a sister or mother with TS. Those with TS will discuss their experiences with school and home life.



**Michelle Rivera, MD**, pediatric endocrinologist, will answer questions about health and how to begin finding doctors that treat adults for TS needs.



## 2023 Youth Program (continued)

### Activities

**Memory books** to collect names and numbers and remember the good times you had during the conference (all ages)

**Selfie Museum** located in the Galleria Mall - Spend time with friends snapping pictures of yourself and each other as you come up with poses in each of the 17+ themed rooms. If you don't have a phone or camera, it's okay. Let us know ahead of time and we'll have you covered. (middle, high school and non-TS)

**Lunch in the Galleria Mall** - (middle, high school and non-TS)

**Interact with others with silly activities** that help you get to know one another better, like Pows and Wows - a great game to help build friendships. Have each person share one good thing and one bad thing from their day. It's simple, but effective! (K-high school)

**Crafts** such as butterfly sponge painting, crayon frames, flapping butterflies, beaded butterflies. (all ages)

**Dress-up, sing and dance**, rest during quiet-time and more. (youngsters)

**Games** - board games and other fun activities

## Youth Program Staff



### Natalie Portway, Youth Program Coordinator

Natalie is the volunteer coordinator of the youth group and has been a youth leader off and on for more than a decade. Watching the kids grow up and make amazing lives for themselves thrills her. She is honored to help them realize that a TS diagnosis does not have to limit them, and she should know as a successful seventh grade math teacher with TS from Signal Hill, California.

### Non-TS Ages 3-7 Leader & Co-Leader



### Ryan Cignarella

yan Cignarella is a Senior Manager at GlaxoSmithKline working on key medicines for patients in research, and the spouse of Danielle Cignarella, who has TS. He openly shares their story of reproductive health, having their first son, and their journey far. He said, "Years of reproductive health has taught us the value of flexibility and free thinking. I welcome every day of this journey as Danielle, and I prepare for a bigger family. The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.



### Jennifer Cawfield

Jennifer joins the youth team this year and has 20 years of teaching experience. She has attended many conferences and looks forward to connecting with her friends as she has TS herself.



## Youth Program Staff (continued)

### Non-TS Age 8+ Leader & Co-Leader



#### **Andrew Stephens**

Andrew returns for the second year as a youth leader. He has a sister in her early twenties that has TS and his mother, Terry Williams, has volunteered as a TSSUS youth leader for years. Andrew loves working with kids because his mother works in a special education classroom, and he has been around children with special needs most of his life. When he is not working, he enjoys spending time with his family.



#### **Terra Williams**

Terra is celebrating her fifth year as a youth leader. She is a mom to three, including a daughter in her early twenties with Turner syndrome. This will be her 12th conference she and her daughter have attended. Terra has worked for years with students with special needs.

### Kindergarten - 2nd Grade Leader & Co-Leader



#### **Brooke Kaczynski**

Brooke is returning for her third year as a youth leader and enjoyed attending the program herself as a child. She loves her job as a first-grade teacher in Nacogdoches, TX. When she's not working, she enjoys spending time with her family, walking the local trails, and enjoying her new kitten.



#### **Megan Banfield**

Megan joins the youth group leadership this year and is an elementary school teacher in the Houston area. One of her besties has TS. Megan has the skills and fun personality to support the youth group team.

### 3rd Grade - 5th Grade Leader & Co-Leader



#### **Gia Ruggiano**

Gia loves being a youth leader, and especially enjoys hearing the children's stories and experiences with TS. As a thirty-something with TS, she lives in Tampa, Florida and enjoys attending the TSSUS conferences.



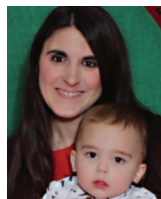
#### **Samantha Smiley**

Samantha became a youth leader at the 2017 conference, and having TS herself, she enjoys getting to know the children and hearing their stories. She is originally from Philadelphia and now lives in New Jersey. She has been attending the TSSUS conference for more than a decade.



## Youth Program Staff (continued)

### Middle School Leader & Co-Leader



#### **Danielle Cignarella**

This will be Danielle's sixth year serving as youth leader. She has TS herself and loves being a positive role for the children and showing them, they can do anything they put their minds to. As a teacher, she has worked with children and teens much of her life and has led service clubs such as Autism Speaks, and Big Brothers Big Sisters.



#### **Christina Gonzalez-Guglielmo**

Christina is returning for her sixth year as a youth leader. As a woman with TS, she has always been an adamant crusader for spreading knowledge within the medical community to show that those with TS can do anything and everything. She is a huge lover of Broadway and is currently employed in the theater industry in New York City.

### High School Leader & Co-Leader



#### **Maria Duprez**

Maria rejoins the youth team with 8+ years of experience as a youth group leader. As a woman with TS, she spent years teaching at an academy in China and recently moved to Delaware and teaches at community college.



#### **Stephanie Guy**


Stephanie is looking forward to spending her fourth year as a youth leader with your child. Her TS journey led her to live in Niceville, Florida with the lights of her life, her husband, Steven, and their son, Nathan. Stephanie loves working as a three-year-old preschool assistant.




#### **Chris Portway - Auxillary Co-Leader**

He has participated in the youth program for 4 years. He is married to the youth group organizer, Natalie. As a husband of someone with TS, and dad, he loves to interact with the kids and has a positive attitude.

 Please complete the [Youth Program Permission Slip](#) for each child who will be participating in the Youth Program no later than July 9, 2023.

 Speakers will vary between age groups based on availability and content being presented and will be presenting on various days and times<sup>o</sup> throughout the conference, unless noted.

 If you have additional questions regarding the youth program, please send an e-mail to [info@turnersyndrome.org](mailto:info@turnersyndrome.org).

