

Youth Program



Youth Activities (Tentative)

Memory Books - each participant will be given a folder to decorate and develop those all-important executive functioning skills by documenting the weekend in age-appropriate ways. These can be used for taking session notes or for contact information of friends.

Improv with Maria Duprez - Maria studied theatre throughout college and developed lessons about improvisation to help participants come out of their shells and work through social anxiety and fears in a fun filled, lighthearted way.

Different Age Group Interaction - Older groups visit younger groups and talk about all things TS, for instance "what did you do when someone called you short?" Bonds are created, the older kids feel important, and the younger ones feel heard. It offers individuals a sense of pride, responsibility, and someone they can relate to.

Anxiety - Learning to cope with anxiety through age-appropriate mindfulness lessons will help attendees to become the best version of themselves.

Crafts - Various age-appropriate crafts will be introduced throughout the two days.

Self-Esteem - Discussion about accepting and loving who you are, uniqueness and all.

Nutrition - age-appropriate presentations on healthy food choices. We will focus on how different foods make you feel better or worse depending on the nutrients it contains.

Endocrinology Q&A with Dr. Michelle Rivera
The middle, high school, and 11 years and up non-TS groups will be able to ask questions and receive age-appropriate answers.

Snack Off - Attendees will be able to create their own unique version of a healthy snack, show it off to others, then eat it and/or share.

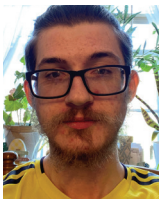
Chill Time - free time will be available each day with time to relax, play a game or chat with friends.

Youth Program Leadership



Natalie Portway, Group Volunteer 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.

Pre-K and Children 5-10 without TS



Andrew Stephens, Leader – I love working with kids because my mother works in a special education classroom, and I've been around children with special needs most of my life. My sister, with TS is in her early twenties and my mother, Terra Williams, has volunteered as a TSSUS youth leader for years. When I'm not working, I enjoy spending time with my family and watching sports. (Group leader; brother of someone with TS and youth team member since 2013)



Brianna Bertrand, Co-Leader – I'm a management assistant with Ventura County in southern California. I'm a native of southern California and lived in New Orleans for a few years! I'm a devoted cat mom to Kasai and Tempest. I love all things true crime and am passionate about equality. (Woman with TS and youth team member since 2024)

Kindergarten – 2nd Grade



Brooke Kaczynski, Leader - Brooke is returning for her 3rd 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.



Micaela Stephens, Co-Leader – I'm a Kindergarten teacher in Murfreesboro, TN and am getting married in June of this year! I have fond memories of singing in the conference talent show and attending the youth program myself, so it seems natural for me to give back by volunteering. (Woman with TS and youth team member since 2024).

3rd-5th Grade



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



Natoli Barbera, Co-Leader - I'm stoked to be back after several years away! I began my career as a teacher and then spent ten years working on Broadway in NYC. For the last five years, I've been living my best life living and working in Orlando, FL. (Woman with TS and youth team member on and off for over a decade).

Middle School

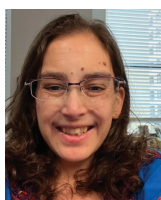


Danielle Cignarella, Leader – This will be Danielle's sixth year serving as youth leader. She has TS herself and loves being a positive role for the children and showing them, they can do anything they put their minds to. As a teacher, she has worked with children and teens much of her life and has led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



Christina Guglielmo, Co-Leader

High School



Maria Duprez, Leader – I teach at a community college in Delaware. I enjoyed living and teaching at an academy in China for many years. (Woman with TS and youth team member since 2016)



Stephanie Guy, Co-Leader – 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.

Non-TS, 11-17 Years



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.



Ryan Cignarella, Co-Leader – I'm a senior manager at GlaxoSmithKline working on key medicines for patients in research. I openly share the story of our reproductive health journey and we now have a son. The journey has taught us the value of flexibility and free thinking. I welcome every day of this journey as we prepare for a bigger family. (Husband of someone with TS and youth team member since 2023)



Chris Portway, Helper/Floater - As the parent of 2 young boys, I enjoy interacting with the kids at the conference as well as helping make the youth program fun and safe. For the last couple years, I have been helping my wife create the schedule and making sure it runs smoothly. (Husband of someone with TS and youth team member since 2018)



Elizabeth Pawlik, helper – I am from Manassas, Virginia (right outside of Washington DC), and was diagnosed with TS at 14 months old. I recently graduated with my Bachelor of Science in Biology from Bridgewater College in May 2024 and am working towards becoming a veterinarian. I currently work at a local veterinary hospital as a kennel and vet assistant. I have attended every TSSUS conference since the 2013 conference except the 2015 conference. I started in the youth group and always had the best time. However, after transitioning out of the youth group, I wanted to find another way to continue being involved in the conferences, which led me to want to help the youth group this year.