# **APRIL Youth Closing Ceremony Transcript**

# **October 14, 2022**

[Captioner standing by.]

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Abby I know this is the closing ceremony what time would you like me to wrap up.

>>SPEAKER: That's an Sarah, Noah question.

>>SPEAKER: I think we wanted 30 to 40 minutes if you want to keep it around there that would be perfect.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: I realize it is Friday night and thank you everybody for hanging in there. Sapphire, I see you in that chat and I owe you an e‑mail. Thank you for introducing me to Brandon through that article.

>>SPEAKER: All right. Welcome, everybody to the very last session of the 2022 APRIL youth conference. Let me turn my camera on just for fun. My name is Abby Ritter and I'm the APRIL youth advisory specialist. You all know the drills. But, if you need captioning, you can click on the CC button at the bottom of your menu. If you would interpretation bottom ton at the bottom of your screen keep an eye out for our ASL interpreters on screen and I will turn it over to Sarah Godman.

>>SPEAKER: Hi everybody. Thank you so much for joining us on a Friday night I'm sad this is our last night at the youth conference. My name is Sarah I'm our steering committee chair Noah is our vice chair and we will be doing a Q and A in a little bit. Stick around and ask us anything you have ever wanted to know. In the meantime we have a very special guest with us tonight Michael Beers since 2001 when he was a delegate at the Montana Youth Leadership Forum he then began a casual court ship with Summit as a peer advocate in 2003 as youth transitions coordinator in 2008. And hopefully will have tomorrow. Both of these relationships have opened doors for Michael to have many opportunities to mod Al as an advocate. He was a board member with APRIL for a better part of his youth and was a school board member for MCPS which is county public schools from 2013 to 2019 Mike Michael is very proud to brag that he has been able to NYLF every summer since 2002 and I staff member of the program throughout the year. Finally Michael insists on telling jokes from time to time which is another habit he has picked up. He has travel it had country and a little bit of Canada telling stories of audience ranging from 1 to 1000 people he works at base community center with home grown comedy to teach communication through improve classes to students of all ages and abilities with that let's give Mike a big welcome and Mike take it away.

>>SPEAKER: Mike you are muted.  [Laughter].

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Okay. So, three years and counting on zoom and that still happens. So, right off the bat, thank you everyone thank you Sarah for the introduction. I am Mike my pronouns are he/him. Visually I am sitting in what will be my at home office soon it is in that progress. I am wearing a black shirt. I have semilong hair and a goatee and be described as a dark skinned white guy or light skinned native. If you are interested I am killing it.

I need to update my bio at the same time. I have recently ironically enough as a transitions coordinator at Summit transitioned away from that. I am now living in Oklahoma city where I will be residing and I am very excited to do that.

And it is an experience. I'm really interested this section I know some of you are able to attend the lead on collaborative training/discussion. We had at the end of September a lot of tonight is a continuation of some of those conversations that we had along with some more stories that I wasn't able to share at that point. And, you know, some stories we kind of fun. It is Friday night and I realize y'all had a long week and I am very interested in hearing a little bit about that. So, for those that may not have seen my presentation at the end of September, I would much prefer much more of a conversation style especially given the zoom format and the end of the week than me sitting here and talking without taking a breath for the next 30 minutes which several of you on the call know I am capable of doing. I would rather learn and absorb a little bit of where you are at. Just having come off an APRIL conference. Later in the presentation, I want to share with you my first experience at APRIL which was obviously very different for a few reasons. One being that it was in person and the other that it was 19 years ago at this point.

So, thank you for having me. Right off the bat I do want to share a little bit more of my background than I did last time. Moving from Montana to Oklahoma City this last month or two got me growing up and the memories you have in a town. Like I said I'm very excited to lead in a new city. I grew up in Montana I never left Montana I travel add I whole lot. I have never been a new kid on the block. And, I think that's a huge part of leadership that I have been marinating and focussing on a lot lately the relationship you have to have with being uncomfortable. We all need those spaces that feel like home to us. And, where we can recharge and do that self‑care.

So, for me especially like for example coming off like exhausting times, so I would relate to this crowd why I left exhausting. Whether you are delegate or a staff member, Sieria knows this. It is so exciting and life changing because of the community that you find and the things that you learn and the confidence you get. But at the end of the week, it is emotionally draining. So my self‑care kit after a long week like YLF or even [word?] Has for years been two to three days of minimal movement and cooking as much like boxed spaghetti or macaroni and cheese from the blue box and just watching the extended lord of the rings on a loop. Like, that's my happy place. That's how I recharge. I spend a good portion of every day in the [word?] Drifting off. I'm understanding and this is something I learned a long time ago from great mentors including ones I met at APRIL your relationship with things change. I really had to understand that's how I recharge but I'm not growing as a leader when I'm doing that. I'm gaining something because I am recharging. Your only growing as a leader if you are experiencing a little bit of tension between, you know, I'm scared of this, I have never done this. But, I want to. I want to be a better leader. I want to be a better example for what I want to pass out and pass on to others and put into the world. So, I am excited a leader not to mention as a fiance and a comedian but as a leader I'm excited for this transition in my life. For the first time in a while I remember truly being uncomfortable and knowing on the other side of that potentially are more opportunities and more creativity that never would have entered my space and my brain and communities I call people unless I put myself in that situation.

This was the first APRIL conference I did not attend as a participant, planner or board member since '03. But I realized for a lot of you this may be your first experience or you are still new. So, I wanted to relay that because that's a lot of where you might be right now. Over the last few days, you probably met some new people from around the country and the world. You learned, you sat through presentations and you really kind of altered the way you look at things. That's something I have always appreciated at APRIL since a lot of us are from rural backgrounds. Our intention is always great as leaders that's why we are here. If you grew up in a rural community, you may not have been able to experience a lot of diversity firsthand. And, be around different people and different languages and even disabilities as diverse as we are.

The APRIL conference can be a lot and stretch. Like I said, later on I want to talk about how stretched as a leader my first APRIL conference was.

But, that's really the challenge that we always have as if you are a leader, of any kind and we talk about that and something I have learned throughout my years absorbing things from our community and other communities is that leadership is not a stagnant thing. It is not what we might first envision when we are Young we think of leaders. When I was young, and coming up and I would say middle school, high school, I wasn't one that signed up for a lot of leadership things.

It wasn't ‑‑ to me it was something that was attached to me somebody that was really outgoing and really popular and kind of an extravert or somebody that really had that energy around people and that wasn't me.

I was always too busy trying to fit in with other people than I was trying to figure out who I am. Much less be a leader. So, when I pictured a leader when I was a student in school and when I was young, to me that signified image was Martin Luther king. Dr. Martin Luther king Jr. Standing in a podium in Washington D.C. in front of thousands of people delivering his famous "I Have a Dream" speech to these giant crowds with a microphone. I was always so captivated by those and other examples of people speaking. I never thought that was me. I was like that's not me, I'm not that person. What I have realized and had to think about over time is that yes that is leadership the ability to get up in front of people and inspire them to find their creativity is leadership through words.

But, in order for that singular image to happen in my brain took a thousand different people doing a thousand different types of leadership. If it is only one man with good ideas, you know, speaking loudly in front of a crowd, you know, it would have been somebody standing there with no crowd and no microphone and, you know, everybody would walk by and be like what is going on. It took people who knew how to organize audiences to get there, provide transportation, get different art and media involved. Getting reporters, TV stations, press releases out there. It took somebody's leadership to think oh, wow. All of these people out doors and there are no bathrooms. I'm going to be the person to bring porta potty's out here. That's leadership. And for a movement to happen much less change, it takes all of those things. Really, understanding we talked about. We correlated the zombie powers as we find ourselves doing so often. When I spoke in September with the idea that being no matter what your super power is. You are never as strong individually as you are as a collective. So, yes your power can do a lot. In order to see the change we really want to in the world, it is about figuring out what your super power is as far as a leadership position. Whether that is speaking in front of people or organizing spread sheets which is something I'm not good at or writing articles, writing papers, writing boxes. Creating media whether it is social media or movies. Those are all things that coming ‑‑ if you can find a way to bring those together, that's how a movement begins and is sustained and that is how a movement evolves.

So, before I get into a couple of stories that I wanted to tell. One that is a true story that happened to me that really helps me see the good we are doing in the world even when it feels like we are not seeing that change and then the other as promised was a story about APRIL. I really want to challenge this group of young people as you go out from this conference with the relationships and knowledge you have gained. I want you to think about two things. One of them I mentioned, but I will repeat for anybody that wasn't able to be there or had something better to do. There is an old saying I got introduced to when I first got YLF in Montana Youth Leadership Forum. The front of the T‑shirt said ADA it was Americans With Disabilities Act on the back of the t shirt it said to boldly go where everyone else has gone before.

I remember being inspired by that saying one because I'm a little bit of an it is a play on a Star Trek thing. The other was it was a call to arms. We have been denied access to these places for too long. So let's boldly go where everyone else already is.

And, I got to say, again, you always have to evolve as a leader. So now, I would say in the last two years of thinking about that quote, it kind of ticks me off. Because, to say to young people and young leaders at our greatest, the best we can do is be exactly like everybody else.

To boldly where everyone else has gone before. If you interpret it a certain way is inherit ly defeatist. That means our mountain top is somewhere everyone has been for a long time.

That's all we should be striving for.

So, my first challenge would be to this audience to go boldly period. Hard stop. Don't worry about where everybody else has been before. Don't worry about being invited to a party that already exists. Worry about going boldly in a direction that you know feels right and trust and intentionally go for creating spaces and parties that other people want to be invited to. Parties they have never seen before. Whether it is through art, whether it is through community spaces or writing or your other organizations not related to disability.

But, having us be able to be the population that other people emulate and want to be part of that's part of the next step. Don't go boldly where everyone else has gone. Go boldly period. And understand that you are going to mess up. But if your intentions are good and maybe the idea doesn't work out. Maybe you say the wrong thing even though your heart was in the right place. Understand that the community of people here and I can only speak for myself, but I know a lot of the people here very well have your back. And, that your failure is the lily pad that will lead to the success. Without us going and trying new things and failing, we are never going to find that thing that worked.

So my second challenge as we go forward and I tell my last couple of stories is when you go to your centers, if you are working with a center for independent living or a board that is related to disability, as we talked about in the training at the end of September, our goal is not only to maintain what we have accomplished as far as disability rights and civil rights in this country, but it has to be that we are evolving at the same time. I know that can be hard, but as young people, whether you are young in age or young to this movement, I think it does us well to challenge the leaders that are running things now.

They simultaneously have things to teach us, but like we talked about, you are not an effective leader unless you are challenging yourself. I think a part of any movement is that young people not push aside older individuals, but challenge them and look at them with ideas and say you know what? We are kind of allergic to any conversation that begins with well, that's the way we have always done it. If that's the response you are getting to your excitement, that might not be the place for you, or you might need to come back the to this community and say hey Beers help me out I have a director that doesn't have a vision. I have board members too concerned with by laws and e‑mailing each other back and forth and arguing than they are trying to serve the community I am seeing the school. I'm not pointing any fingers, but I can say after this many years of experience that happens. Through no ones fault, but you need a community that challenges itself to be better.

I just saw a comment made me giggle. Thank you for that. So, yes trust. There is a community even if it doesn't feel like it locally that wants to evolve. Wants to honor our past but evolve our future into something that is more inclusive. Not just to people outside of disability, but to our own people. Because without going into a lot of detail, we all know there are spaces we create within disability that aren't necessarily welcoming to other people with other kinds of disabilities and we can do better.

So, I'm going to tell ‑‑ with the time I have left I will tell you about my first APRIL experience. It was back in '2003. It is all about challenging and being uncomfortable. Yes, I can give a keynote speech. I can do comedy. I love these things now. But, that wasn't always me. And still to this day one on one in a small interactions with people I don't know, I still get incredibly anxious and awkward. So I wasn't comfortable when I went through my program director took me to that and I spent three days being a sponge and didn't talk to anybody. I listened to incredible people communicate and network and just be themselves like Linda Gonzalez and Cathy Hatch. People I was too afraid to talk to but admired while I was getting my danishes in the hall way. My program director did though. Spending nights I hope knock on wood next year you get to experience live and in person. They used to do a talent show. It was an opportunity for APRIL members to get up and do a talent. My program manager signed me up to do stand up without is asking me and I was terrified, because again I hadn't talk today anybody at this time. I did it. This was the one thing I knew how to do. I did five minutes of stand up in front of 350 people or something and it went really well. People really respond today it. I had never done stand up in front of a crowd that all identified with disability that way. To hear that in addition to just having a good show was amazing.

I mean, I remember I was so jazzed afterwards and sitting there and in the lobby and I was like I wish I had somebody to talk to but I was I'm not going to walk up to anybody. I hear some music the same music that had been playing in the lounge every night I was there. I was too afraid to go in. It was who I later found a crowd that includes 30 or 40 people mingling and talking and Billy [name?] Who just retired as the board ‑‑ the director of APRIL. APRIL's second director ever after Linda and a mentor of mine for years later to this day. At that time, I didn't know him. He was just the guy that played the guitar and I was hiding behind this fake plant in the lobby and kind of looking over and they saw me and they started waving me over. Of course I looked behind me and was like nope they must be talking to somebody else. They were waving me over. I finally went over there all bashful like and Billy tapped the seat next to him and said sit right here. And he played another song and as soon as it was done he said somebody grab Mike a beverage and whatever he wants and any time somebody came into our view he introduced me and said this is Michael he is from Montana. He introduced me to those people. And at one point probably 15 minutes after I sat down, very very matter of factually just introduced me to somebody and said give Mike another drink he is with us. He's with us. I don't know if Billy meant those words to be three of the most powerful words I had heard to that point in my life. But, hearing them in that context and being somebody that struggled finding community their entire life and not feeling like I was never enough of anything. You know, I was never enough of a popular person. I was never talkative enough. I was never white enough I was never Indian enough. I was never disabled enough. To have this community and that group of people say after knowing me for such a short amount of time he's with us meant the world to me. It is part of the reason a piece of my professional and personal heart will be with APRIL in this community. They have seen me. They not only said it once but said it over and over and over again and seen me at my highest of highs and absolute lowest of lows and those three words have never ever changed. There is other parts of that story I can tell people some other time, but that was the major take away.

And I realized I have gone a little bit over time, but that happens when one gets nostalgic. I'm happy to stick around and answer questions and have a conversation. But, allow me to be the voice that represents a thousand people that I have met at this conference including Sieria Royster and others that you met this week in saying every single one of you is with us. And, I'm honored to be able to do that. Thank you.

>>SPEAKER: Thank you Mike. I think we actually have a couple minutes if anybody does have questions feel free to drop them in the chat, I can take a look at them and answer them together. I'm seeing if any have come in the Q and A box. We do have a comment not a question but I wanted to say thank you Mike for changing my life. I found the privilege of being able to call you my mentor and friend I wish you all the best in the new city.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Thank you Jake keep holding it down in Montana for me.

>>SPEAKER: Do we have any questions, you can raise your hand, drop it in the chat.

>>SPEAKER: Grace has a question. How do we feel about how independent living can keep up with DJ and intersectionality across different and multiple identities.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Keep up with DJ?

>>SPEAKER: I'm not sure what that would mean. Subpoena.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Is that person or.

>>SPEAKER: Maybe meaning disability justice.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Oh. Okay. I was really hoping for a remix. Isn't too far off I'm sorry who asked that question.

>>SPEAKER: This is grace.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Grace, thank you for that question and I can only say in my view, it is the right question. Again, you use the phrase how do we keep up? And maybe, you know, worry less about keeping up and worry more about leading. So, if we are always, again striving to be ‑‑ you can always strive to learn from everyone else and other communities and other movements. For example, I mentioned today I got an education. I met brad Lomax who is a civil rights leader. One of the founder of the black panthers in Washington D.C. as some of you hopefully know. I just learned this today. Back in the 1960's and as many times as I have talked about the black panthers helping with the 504 sit ins that's the dude that made the connection and the black panthers paid for Judy and the 25 to go to DC. We can always learn from other people and other people's examples. Just like we say individually, you are only an expert on yourself. I think we got to focus on learning what we can and doing better once we know those things. Like, [name?]. But we also have to have an eye on, well, if we are ‑‑ if we are only ever trying to catch up with other people or always only ever doing things the way they have always been done, those things haven't worked yet.

So, eventually somebody is going to have to try something that has never been done before and be that example for other people and people with disabilities I know history always has us trailing behind as far as civil rights, but we have the ability to be the example for other people, and I think there is nothing more evidence ‑‑ made that more evident than the last three years the last three years with COVID and everything else that has gone on. Everyone had to learn how to do the exact same things they have always done except they had to find a different way. You know where that wasn't a hard shift for? Anybody with a disability. Because, that's our DNA. Our DNA is finding new ways to do the same things. And, out of that, has always come a better way. Technology is probably is easiest thing. If it weren't for people with disabilities finding a new way, we ‑‑ half the things you do on your iPhone wouldn't exist half the things on your iPhone started out as an accomodation. I remember using word prediction software in middle school and it was brand new and the only people that got access to it were people like me that had trouble typing because I have 9 fingers. Now people don't know how to type without it.

So, we ‑‑ I don't have an answer to your question. But, it is the right one, Grace. And, just keep in mind, we have ‑‑ we need to have confidence to understand that we can be the example.

>>SPEAKER: Those are great points we are seeing intersectionality is key yeah. All great, great points. I think we have time for one more question. I see one in the chat this is from Sapphire how can you see disability representation changing in this generation with young leaders.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Again the person that introduced me to Brad Lomax thank you I look forward to a lot of conversation about intersectionality and your question going forward.

But, I would say something that I am really excited about is ‑‑ and we have seen for a long time and those of us that work with youth in our title is ‑‑ and people are finally talking about it. And again, I want to give credit a lot of props for APRIL a lot of props for being the first national disability program to start this conversation in a meaningful way. Not only APRIL fact number one. APRIL has never had a youth advisory counsel. We have had a steering committee and different youth projects. But, it was one ‑‑ the advice of youth APRIL was the first organization to put youth directly on their board. Not a separate board, not a kids table that advised the adults and let them take our picture. They said, no your voice is more valuable or at least as valuable as every director that we have.

I haven't been on the board in a while, but that is something that needs to be part of what APRIL does always and in the future is that reminder that independent living has always been a movement that responds to the passions of what young people are seeing in their lives.

Ed and Judy didn't start this in their 40s they started it when they were your age. Going forward we are going to start to finally address in a meaningful way and include not only issues, but the talents of individuals that have nonapparent disabilities.

I think that's key to our culture, I think that's key to elevating ourselves as far as equity and creativity in this country is that we start really pushing forward the needs and talents of people from the, you know, from the autism spectrum to mental health to nonapparent learning disabilities. Because, we claim them on our reports when we do our SIL [word?] But some how when it comes to the issues on our legislative agenda, I don't see those very often. But, think a wave is coming just based on what I have seen from young people and what I have learned from individuals like you.

>>SPEAKER: Awesome. Thanks Mike. You all are the next generation and it starts with us like Mike says all of us together.

So thank you Mike for spending time with us on a Friday night.

I'm sure that everybody has a way to contact you if they would like to get in touch with you. Let's give Mike a big APRIL round of applause. Awesome. Thank you for joining us.

>>SPEAKER: Yay.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: Absolutely thank you for the work you do.

>>SPEAKER: Absolutely. All right. So we are going to move on go ahead Abby did you want to say something.

>>SPEAKER: I was going to help moderate if that's helpful.

>>SPEAKER: Yes, we are going to move into a Q and A time me Noah and Opal I don't know if you would like to turn your camera on Opal. If you have questions for us maybe the work we do questions about APRIL, questions about disability advocacy feel free to drop them in chat the Q and A box and we will do this probably for about 15 mens or so.

Anything you ever wanted to know.

>>SPEAKER: All right.

>>SPEAKER: Sorry I was late by the way I was driving in the car.

>>SPEAKER: No worries.

>>SPEAKER: It is difficult on zoom when you are rural and you are driving in the car.

>>SPEAKER: All right. So, as a reminder y'all know how to use the Q and A and chat, but we host yearly elections for the youth steering committee executive board. Sarah will no longer be serving as the chair of our youth steering committee as she old like me.

>>SPEAKER: You are not too old Sarah.

>>SPEAKER: So if you are interested in learning about how to get on to the committee, if you are interested in learning about what the youth steering committee does, or more about how to get involve window APRIL, now is the time. Sapphire asks how does one become a presenter for a session.

>>SPEAKER: I think I can answer that because I presented this year.

>>SPEAKER: Go for it.

>>SPEAKER: This year, April basically what APRIL likes to do from what I have experienced is send out a call for workshops which is basically you give a little bit of information about your topic, what you are wanting to present and multiple people in your group and what accommodations you will need for the presentation. And one question on my application was if I presented before. I put no. Time [indiscernible] the full version.

That's really it from what I remember.

>>SPEAKER: Uh‑huh. So, we will put out a call for presentations as the conference gets closer. Once you submit your proposal for a presentation, we have a committee of folks who review the different proposals and then they get accepted or get declined for that year.

Yes, we will send out e‑mails. If everybody is interested, a great way to continue your involvement is many of you already receive our youth e‑mails but if you want to get on to the APRIL list serve, Sieria are you still here.

>>SPEAKER: Yep.

>>SPEAKER: How does one sign up for the APRIL list serve?

>>SPEAKER: So, the APRIL list serve goes to ‑‑ am I echos.

>>SPEAKER: No.

>>SPEAKER: Okay the APRIL list serve is to members.

>>SPEAKER: Oh, it is to members, that's right.

>>SPEAKER: Youth can become a member you can become an individual member. They create a [word?] For youth or if you have an SIL you can make your SIL is a member and get e‑mail that. We also have a youth steering committee list serve as well. We will send out an e‑mail after the youth conference. Well after November and we after we have recovered and we will send out an e‑mail and say do cow want to be includes in this and it will give you an opportunity to say no don't e‑mail me. From there, we will send out stuff from there.

And then, we will also ‑‑ some of you are youth coordinate or work at an SIL as youth staff you can e‑mail me or Abby and we can get your contact that way and include you on there.

>>SPEAKER: Really quick is your question about being on the youth steering committee board or the APRIL board itself?

>>SPEAKER: Both. So to serve on the youth steering committee everyone is welcome to come ‑‑ all you have to do is come to the meetings. We meet monthly, and you are welcome to come to as many or as few meetings as you want. Obviously the more the better you get more say in helping to plan the youth conference. If you want to serve on the youth steering executive committee, that is an election process which I believe that happens in early in the calender year.

>>SPEAKER: I think it starts December and then we don't get our results until January.

>>SPEAKER: Yes. As for the board itself, Sieria I'm glad you are here I don't fully remember how the nomination process goes.

>>SPEAKER: I will tell you this year the if you are on the closing you might have heard Dan talk about a membership meeting happening. Our members what I was mentioning earlier if you want to be a member, they vote on who is our board to seat Michael Beers where he sat on and started was a youth seat. You have to be 18 to 30 years old to sit on that and have to have a center for independent living or statewide independent living financially support you if we travel to send you to those events and hopefully come to the APRIL conference as well and hopefully they are in person. Youth represent that center on your board. And so, the way you do that is ‑‑ SIL. I don't know what an SIL is I was looking at the chat. Does SIL count? Er carcinoma can you tell me what an SIL is and I can tell you. Wow would apply nominations are actually closed already for this year's board seat. But we do not have a youth running for a seat this year. We will be empty one youth seat. A youth did I want register or run for that seat. What will happen is after the election is over they will have to appoint somebody to that seat since it is empty. If you are interested, we can get you connected to a nomination form and then you point your finger at me Michael Beers I thought you were yelling at me.

>>MICHAEL BEERS: I'm pointing my finger at all of everybody. Because there needs to be 20 people up for that seat from this call.

>>SPEAKER: There is two seat that is are for youth. And they switch every single year. So if you were in Noah's session and heard Shaylen talking she is one of our youth seats and if you are Mel's sessions Evan is there and he is other youth seat. If you are interested in being a board seat get with me and I can get you some information because you do have to but that is open. So, that's something you would like to maybe it is not this year maybe it is next year we have a seat open every year for somebody to run in.

>>SPEAKER: Can I ‑‑ I have a.

>>SPEAKER: Go ahead.

>>SPEAKER: Sorry. I have enough time in my schedule that I can be in charge of sending out e‑mails to whoever needs to be on the list or get the information about getting on the board or nomination forms for next year's committee. I just need once the info comes out I can send it to everybody.

>>SPEAKER: Awesome. I see in our Q and A, Katie asked what the time expectation to be a member on the youth steering committee. If you are on the regular steering committee it is once a month if you do run for a board position, on the steering committee there is a little bit more time involved Noah, Opal and I would meet as chair and vice chair at least once a month.

>>SPEAKER: At least once or twice a month to make sure we are on the right track.

>>SPEAKER: You get a lay out of what to do each month for the conference and what needs to be planned and as the chair and vice chair, you would be helping to make sure that those things stay on task. I was able to juggle it with a full time job. Noah has been a huge help and Opal has been our amazing secretary queen sending out the agenda and it is a team effort without I would say Katie if you are interested you can definitely still do it maintaining a full time job.

>>SPEAKER: I will say the hour requirement is different depending on the chair that you take. Like the position of chair and vice chair is time requirements and job requirements are different than say the fund raising chair or the secretary chair or media and out reach chair look for a chair that you think fits best and see if you feel like you can be able to fulfill that role.

Plus I'm hoping to run for chair this year. I blame you Sarah.  [Laughter].

>>SPEAKER: I'm a grandma I have to leave. Somebody has to take over. Actually I'm an APRIL grandma now.  [Laughter].

>>SPEAKER: I did also want to bring up while we are here talking about ways to be involved as APRIL youth. We are working on starting up a monthly youth peer support group. It is going to be meeting at least to start once to twice a month. It is going to depend on funding, but we are hoping to have a group where all of our youth can come together and just talk about the things that are going on in their lives about what it is like to be a disabled young purpose in rural America. We don't have all of the details yet, but stay tuned, we are hoping to get it started at the new year. So, that will be free to participate. No cost to anybody. And, as we get things started, we will make sure that we have all the accommodations that people would need. Keep an eye out on the APRIL social media pages and website for more information as that gets started.

>>SPEAKER: Abby.

>>SPEAKER: Yes.

>>SPEAKER: Can you e‑mail me about that.

>>SPEAKER: Absolutely I can.

>>SPEAKER: Since I don't have socials at the moment.

>>SPEAKER: Absolutely I can.

>>SPEAKER: I envy you and your ability to not participate in social media. I spent far too long on Twitter.

>>SPEAKER: Abby that's the devil's den you are in.

>>SPEAKER: I know.

>>SPEAKER: Just as a reminder to people who want to join the YSC nonexecutive board Sarah here even though she is an APRIL grandma which I think is not wrong even though she is an amazing person I have work window this year she will probably still be involved with APRIL in the committee itself just not in a position of executive power.

>>SPEAKER: Yeah, that's a great point. To clarify that only leadership positions have an age requirement. Even if you are above 30 if you a youth coordinator you can be of any age. That's a great clarification thanks.

>>SPEAKER: One thing I will say about the youth steering committee this was just introduced this year. Every member of the committee has a mentor sort of situation where we would learn from the past year's team. Last year for me I was one of only three people on the board for executive because my former chair did not want to ‑‑ was not the best in delegating responsibilities as much Sarah technically became my mentor and I became her mentor and I'm hoping to keep Sarah on as my mentor as I became chair.

>>SPEAKER: I love that, we are all passing the torch to each other.

>>SPEAKER: I still have 7 years I can run for it.

>>SPEAKER: I would love to stay involved however I can help I'm a grandma for sure.

>>SPEAKER: Yes.

>>SPEAKER: I see [word?] In the chat do you want to speak as a youth board seat. Maybe your experience of that?

>>SPEAKER: I moved you over so you can turn your camera on if you are interested. No pressure.

>>SPEAKER: Hi, everyone. Sorry trying to press all the right buttons running from one zoom to the next it feels like you can get out of breath so easily in the virtual space thank you for baring with me and inviting me to speak and sorry I haven't been able to come around as much this week. It has been a busy week. I also coexecutive director of the partnership for inclusive disaster strategy and we are a disability national lead organization that focus on people with disabilities before and after disasters and emergencies.

Great work that has been happening there. And as Sarah knows well and can also speak to it is a lot of on going work we have a national disability and disaster hot line we help support people with disabilities impacted by disasters connect to local resources like centers for independent living and making sure they have those on going supports and services as well as connecting those immediate needs like food, water and shelter and on going systemic advocacy we talk about here. I know on goingly our issues around health care and housing and transportation all of these things are disproportionately impacted in disasters and it is the thing that I focus on every day so I talk about it a lot.

And always really encouraging folks that are interested in this area to connect and talk more because we certainly need more youth to be really highlights on these issues and getting involved. One thing that we really hike to point out is disabled people we are first responders in disasters centers for independent living are first responders in disasters. We need to make sure that they are held ‑‑ upheld during disasters and certainly that is something we are always encouraging youth and younger folks to join in and really get into learning more about and eager into. I know Abby is one of those as well been getting others involved and we have many other folks I know we have been connecting with throughout the youth conference as well as throughout the youth committee and looking forward to meeting all of you more and learning more about you all and please don't hesitate to reach out and I am so excited to be here with you all and it has been a great conference this whole week. So proud of all the great work that comes out of APRIL ment everyone should be proud of ourselves and have a round of applause for everyone we all did it together and it certainly takes all of us and congratulations for the great work of this week thanks everyone. It is great to be with you all.

>>SPEAKER: Thank you Shaylin if you could before you have to run away from us could you tell us a little bit about being on the board in a youth seat and what that's looked like?

>>SPEAKER: This is Shaylin absolutely I was so eager I jumped in at a perfect timing when I heard you all asking questions around who is a youth board seat now and how to become a board member and got me so excited I couldn't help myself but to start typing in the chat frantically. Thank you all. I think it is a really great opportunity to have your voice heard. As a younger person, as well as to be able to raise the voices of our community and to be able to speak to the issues that younger folks are dealing with and are more connected to and making sure that our whole community and everyone in our communities are really paying attention and involving us throughout all aspects of our daily lives and what we do. That includes all of the on going advocacy and pieces that APRIL focuses on that is also how APRIL moves forward and you get to have a voice in making sure that our community as younger folks I don't think I have identified by my age I am 27 now. I had to think about that. I just turned 27 in July and I tend to forget how fast time can go by. Folks say that it goes by really fast once you hit a certain age and I start to feel that a lot more lately I suppose. How fast time can go. And, I think that having the opportunity to be on the board and also in other leadership positions within APRIL is a great thing to put on resumes and be able to put on our job applications and to be able to use within our on going work in any area that we choose to do throughout our lives. I think if you are curious and want to learn more you should certainly keep asking those questions I saw coming into the chat and please don't hesitate to reach out to us at APRIL we really encourage everyone's involvement in any way to like to and support you in which ways you want to.

>>SPEAKER: Thank you Shaylin. She has been working over time with our center or centers in Florida. Thank you for juggling it all this week and being part of the conference and working over time to help those that have been effected by the hurricane we really appreciate.

>>SPEAKER: Thank you all for the on going work and partnership together it really takes all of us. Appreciate the collaboration and the friendship and peer support because that's really what it is all about.

Any questions I would be happy to answer I'm happy to stick around I might have to grab my computer charger, but I am here.

>>SPEAKER: If folks are thinking of questions or comments I am going to plug one more thing while we are all here. This year was the very first of the APRIL lead on collaborative which is our step two leadership program. We had 12 ‑‑ yes, 12 participants this year. Who were between the ages we accept folks between the age of 15 and 30 you have to identify as having a disability and you spend six to seven weeks connecting on zoom with other people with disabilities in your age range learning about kind of what comes next in leadership. Many of us have been through leadership camps and gone to a youth leadership forum. Maybe you have participated in some kind of leadership training in your school or in college or through whatever programs you attend, but this program is really about what comes next. How do you take those skills you have that you have mastered and move them to the next level how do you identify the problem that is your community is facing? How do you learn to really get into conflict resolution and learn what your own personal values are and what your value is in, you know, your work and volunteering and your board positions and anything that you are serving on. So, the lead on collaborative is ‑‑ you have to apply and be accepted but it is totally free to participate and we are hoping that next year we will actually be able to bring our participants if we having an in person conference to the in person conference. Information for next year is not yet available but as soon as it is, it will be in that e‑mail list we will be adding many of you to and it will also be available on the APRIL website and on our social media pages.

Shaylin is putting her information as well as information about disaster and emergency preparedness committee that anybody is welcome to join into the chat. Saphire we haven't talked about it. My thought ‑‑ let me get back to you. I don't know for sure. I don't want to say yes, I don't want to say no because I don't know for sure yet.

But, as soon as we all know, we will keep y'all Saphira and and Erica and Noah all participated this year. Noah what did you like about your experience in collaborative.

>>SPEAKER: What I liked most about the collaborative was the networking I managed to get at this point I guess most of the people I did the lead on collaborative with as allies I can have when talking about disabilities. It is hard to talk about it with normal people. And also follow up question Abby are members of the lead on collaborative a part of YSC immediately or do they still have to attend meetings?

>>SPEAKER: So I mean, anybody and everybody who is involved with APRIL is welcome to be part of the YSC. So they will not be on the executive committee because that is still an election process and we want all of our youth to have a voice on who they want to be on that executive board. And I encourage them, please if you are here, and I know you are because I see your names, please do come to youth steering committee because now that you have been through lead on, we want to keep you involved even if we don't have round two for those of you who have been through round one. When is it? I know that gets voted on by other ‑‑

>>SPEAKER: Yeah, it gets changed about every year depending on everyone's schedule. This year it was the third Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

>>SPEAKER: Also can I say in November then we will have our debriefing meeting on the conference in November on the third Monday then. And that's when we will finalize who wants to be on the ballot. If that's something you are interested that's the meeting you want to go on.

>>SPEAKER: I'm going to put it in the chat right now and we will send out an e‑mail.

>>SPEAKER: Abby would you drop my e‑mail in the chat for everybody. I'm trying I'm having accessibility issues with the chat.

>>SPEAKER: You are at OPALBESAW at GMAIL.

>>SPEAKER: Yes.

>>SPEAKER: If you are not on the e‑mail list just send it over to Abby or Sieria and you have to hop on the zoom link Opal will send out the meeting link about a week ahead of time and send a reminder e‑mail too. You just have to show up and make sure your e‑mail is on your list.

>>SPEAKER: Definitely a week before as well to make sure we have what we need to talk about too.

It will be our last meeting as a team.

>>SPEAKER: And you are all welcome to attend. So, we also ‑‑ we are just sending you all of the ways to be involved with APRIL. This is an excellent group of people you are all fabulous and we want to keep you all involved. We also [coughing.] Sorry everybody. I have what I think is a cold. I don't know. Might be COVID I'm testing negative who knows. APRIL has an advocacy committee which everybody is welcome to attend. The advocacy committee is ‑‑ where is that information in my e‑mail? [Singing.]

>>SPEAKER: It is the first Wednesday, thank you. So we meet the first Wednesday of every month at 4:00 p.m.est earn which is 3:00 p.m. central. Which I know is a tough time for some folks especially those of you on the west coast but the advocacy committee is a very great way to get involved. Because, it really is our one of our more active committees where people come together and talk about the things that are really important to them within disability advocacy. Anybody is welcome to attend those meetings.

And, all you have to do, I believe to register for those is on our website.

>>SPEAKER: Kay asked to be a board member as a youth. Not the steering committee but the April board does the YSC have to endorse you. Has this been a role or am I making this up?

>>SPEAKER: That is a rule. I believe. We asked the youth steering committee to endorse whatever youth ‑‑ whatever person is running for a youth board seat. Because, the board ‑‑ the youth board seats are representing our larger youth community. We want to make sure that youth approve of what is running. So, yes.

>>SPEAKER: Great. Any other questions? Comments?

>>SPEAKER: All right I was going to mention really quick. All of those things everybody has thrown a lot of stuff at you. What we can do everybody on the youth conference if you registered for this you are on there. If you are here, you are on that list. We can send all of these out on the e‑mail so you can go ahead and sign up for it and add it to your calenders and see all of the information about the board seats if that's what you are interested. It can all be in one place we can send it to y'all that way. Help we don't have a pencil or there is so much. So, that can all come to you guys as well.

And then, I think we can send it out before the next youth steering committee so you have that as well. No worries.

>>SPEAKER: Expect an e‑mail from us ‑‑ I'm going to give us two to three weeks. But, expect an e‑mail ‑‑ go ahead Opal.

>>SPEAKER: Thank you Abby for sending me an e‑mail so I don't have to try to paste them over from the chat because that's really not working for me now.

>>SPEAKER: Listen that's what we are here to do is support each other. So an e‑mail will come from myself or Opal or all of the above with information about how to stay involved.

My words ran out just now.

>>SPEAKER: That is okay. And I just want to say, obviously coming off of the youth steering committee executive board. Take that leap. If you have any interest to want to be part of APRIL to step up your leadership skills take that chance. I know it is a risk it is scary to go on a ballot and have that fear of maybe people aren't going to vote me maybe I'm not good enough or have enough experience. If you are believing any of those lies just take the risk. Noah I don't know if you can speak to that as well. I want to encourage everybody you don't have to have any qualifications to be on the APRIL youth steering committee executive board Noah you or Opal anything to add.

>>SPEAKER: Go ahead Opal.

>>SPEAKER: Start somewhere small if you are scared. Start advocating is somewhere small and it can have a domino effect. That's how it happened with me and next thing you know you've become a really big super integral huge part of this community and you are changing people's lives every ‑‑ as Mike Beers said do the something that you can do but don't worry about doing everything.

>>SPEAKER: In fact I would suggest not doing everything.

>>SPEAKER: Unfortunately I have to go because my friends are throwing me a little birthday party.

>>SPEAKER: Happy birthday.

>>SPEAKER: Happy birthday.

>>SPEAKER: My birthday today it is next week but my friends won't be in town on my actual birthday. So I got to go get ready for that but I will talk to you next month.

>>SPEAKER: Have fun.

>>SPEAKER: Thank you Opal happy birthday.

>>SPEAKER: Thank you.

>>SPEAKER: Noah any last minute thoughts you have for everybody about leadership?

>>SPEAKER: I have to honestly say when it comes to ‑‑ I was nervous as well putting my name on the ballot my first year in 2020 I signed up to run for vice chair. I was nervous because the only experience I had with the youth steering committee was with Mels who was chair two years ago and I was a normal member I waive and give it up able to attend all of meetings because I was at work at that time. One thing I will say about that as well like Opal said start small. I jump head first into it knowing I might not get elected but surprisingly I got elected out of a very [word?] Competition. But, as well, just remember even though you are running, if you do decide to run this year all of the votes are anonymous. So, you never truly know who voted for you, but always believe that if you were voted and chosen to be on our board with us, there was a very good reason. We do ‑‑ we accept people who want to help. We are always here to help as well. Especially since this will be my fourth year next year on the board and it is definitely hard work. I will never say it is not hard. But, it is also rewarding work and my opinion the true image of a leader is being willing to take advice Sarah may have been our leader this year but she was always coming to us asking for advice and I was always happy to provide and heck Abby is our eyes and ears for the board we always went to her for advice. So we were always working together as a unit. We hope you guys can give us more advice as we continue on through the years here at APRIL.

>>SPEAKER: Do you mind if I make a comment.

>>SPEAKER: Go ahead.

>>SPEAKER: I wanted to say Noah we first met, guess in 2019 at your first in person conference you jumped right into the work for virtual. We were right in the beginning of the pandemic and jumped right on the committee and jumped up in leadership throughout this time and Sarah you have not joined us for an in person. Sarah has never seen our in person conference and Abby has not either. Abby hasn't been with our organization for a year yet. I wanted to give kudos to you all you have jumped into leadership roles not knowing what it looks like Noah has been able to be that guide you have all been done great. We the youth steering committee was way ahead of the actual APRIL board don't tell them I said that.

>>SPEAKER: Oh we will.

>>SPEAKER: They had themes and designs and everything for an in person conference and had to switch it last minute and you all did a beautiful job of just that transition and you took like the punches with every single term of we are not doing this anymore. And I think it was a great youth conference. I thoroughly enjoin joyed it. This is has been my highlight. Don't tell the rest of them. This has been my highlight what is the best part the youth conference has been the best part of the week. And Michael spoke to what we are going to call the OG of APRIL. The original APRIL conferences. But, this is where the heart has been all week. For me there has been a lot of changes at APRIL. And this has been the Sam good warm fuzzy feeling of a conference has been the youth conference which is amazing because Sarah and Abby haven't seen that conference and were able to bring it. It shows to the work that all of y'all did on the executive committee and Opal has left and that work she has done as well. Y'all did an fantastic job and it has been a such a pleasure coming every night. It has not been work. This is the fun part of the day. Thank you all for jumping in and making it all work.

>>SPEAKER: My heart. I would like to thank Sieria as well. Abby wasn't with a part around the time I joined and Sieria was our point of contact. She is an amazing person to work with. I worked with her for the end of 2019 to beginning of this month or this year actually with APRIL and she might be hard to get in contact with I'm ribbing you a little bit because I feel like I can.

>>SPEAKER: I feel like you and I have had opposite experiences.

>>SPEAKER: Not done.

>>SPEAKER: Noah find me on teams I will message and call you every day like I did Abby I was getting messages at 11:00 p.m. I am like what are you doing and again what was I doing checking my Teams at 11:00 p.m. But she was there first.

>>SPEAKER: That's a you problem Abby. But I will say this. Sieria throughout it all has been wonderful to make us well rounded and a guiding force to keep us really on the right path since even though Mels had gold fish brain at points. It made us have to make sure we were all in step on time and making sure everyone was able to have a great experience can I get a round of applause for Siera everyone?

>>SPEAKER: Well it is almost 8:30 and I know it is Friday night Opal is going to have a birthday party. We want to thank you all so much for your involvement this week. Thank you for hanging out with us to late at night if you are on the east coast. Stay involved and reach out to any of us if you have any questions and we hope to see you very soon.

>>SPEAKER: Thank you everybody. Happy APRIL conference.

>>SPEAKER: Happy APRIL conference rock on everyone.

>>SPEAKER: Bye everybody.