



Gracie Persists with Renewed Sense of Purpose and Empowerment

Since the age of 8, Gracie has dreamed of becoming a veterinarian. But since age 15, she began securing part-time jobs to help her family thrive.

When her parents separated and her father moved to Georgia, she got her first part-time job because money was tight. Two years later, her father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and Dementia, and she added another part-time job to pay for her family's growing needs. Soon, she and her mother began caring for him.

As a teenager, she was faced with formidable circumstances that could have taken her off course.

According to a 2015 report from America's Promise Alliance (APA) — a national organization focused on ending the United States' high school dropout crisis, led by former U.S. Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell — in the U.S. alone, there are approximately 1.2 million high school dropouts each year, and 20 percent of those say they left school in order to contribute to their family's household income.

WYMAN'S SUPPORT

Instead of signaling defeat, Gracie persisted, due in part to the support she received from Wyman to pursue a powerful vision for her future.

"My life was chaotic, but I committed myself to everything I could," said Gracie. "My Wyman counselors helped me realize that it was important to make time for myself, and focus on what I wanted to be. With mentors at my side,

I had a renewed sense of purpose, and I was ready to start over."

Gracie is just one example of how bonds with caring, competent adults can help teens avoid risky behaviors, such as dropout, and instead, empower them to identify their passions and succeed.

In the Teen Leadership Program, Wyman helped Gracie choose her career path, secure financial aid, pursue her college of choice, and land an internship — where she gained

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—Gracie

Gracie Persists, continued

firsthand animal behavior experience. Today, Gracie is double-majoring in animal science and psychology to become an animal behaviorist.

IMPACT

Like Gracie, teens in Wyman programs are gaining a sense of belonging, and the skills and confidence to graduate high school, apply to college, and enter four-year universities at rates far beyond their peers.

Wyman serves 3,000 teens across the St. Louis region. One-hundred percent of teens in Wyman's Teen Leadership Program graduated successfully in 2017, despite the only 89 percent of teens who graduated in the state of Missouri in 2016.

ABOUT TEEN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (TLP)

TLP boosts teens' college tenacity through a six-year course of leadership experiences, and college access and persistence programming that begins the summer after eighth grade. Wyman coaches help teens identify their values, talents and interests, and explore aligned career paths. Teens participate in college tours, more than 40 hours of community service annually, and work with coaches to apply for college and secure financial aid that reduces the financial burden after graduation. TLP coaches also provide on-campus college mentoring.

ABOUT WYMAN

Wyman has been dedicated to serving youth from disadvantaged circumstances for 120 years. Wyman empowers teens, equips adults and strengthens systems. Wyman's engaging, empowering and experiential programs and services help teens build skills, develop a sense of self and connections to their world. As a result, teens achieve educational success, develop healthy behaviors and relationships, and exhibit life and leadership skills. From thousands of teens in St. Louis — to tens of thousands nationally — Wyman programs and services make a difference in the lives of today's teens and tomorrow's leaders.

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