



Becoming Comfortable Outside Your Comfort Zone

At age 13, Orlando joined Wyman as a participant in the [Teen Outreach Program \(TOP\)](#) at Normandy Middle School, and then as a member of the [Teen Leadership Program \(TLP\)](#). The confidence he gained and the skills he learned in these programs have helped him realize his potential and create a powerful vision for his future.

SUCCESS FOR ORLANDO

Today, Orlando is a rising junior at Cardinal Ritter College Preparatory High School. He joins the ranks of the more than 3,000 thriving teens Wyman serves in the region.

As a young teen, Orlando faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles that would have stopped many in their tracks. His mother had battled diabetes since she was 16 years old. The odds were stacked against him: in the US at least 22 percent of youth leave school to care for a family member each year.

“When I first joined Wyman, I was at risk of failing. It was a reflection of my behavior and what was going on in my life at the time. My mom had battled kidney failure for 11 years, and I was worried about her, myself and my other siblings. When I showed up at school, I was close-

minded and fearful, because I felt like so many things were beyond me,” Orlando said.

“But my Wyman coaches were there for me. Suddenly, I had someone beside me to help me overcome my fears. Even though I was going through tough times, I learned that I could lean on others, that I could set goals, and that I was capable of more than I knew.”

Through his time in TLP, Orlando developed a passion for helping others, and for leadership. During the program, Wyman coaches help teens identify their personal interests and college and career paths. Teens also experience a journey of self-discovery alongside their peers through their six consecutive years in the program. Outdoor challenges set in a camp environment encourage them to

step outside of their comfort zones, and learn to problem-solve with their peers, become a part of a team, achieve their shared goals, develop a positive and stronger sense of self and forge powerful bonds that grow and deepen throughout their high school careers.

Since being in Wyman’s programs, Orlando has set—and achieved—many goals, from leading a team of his peers down a treacherous river while white water rafting, to campaigning for the role of Class President (which he won). Orlando has built his confidence, become more comfortable outside his comfort zone and has built relationships with mentors and friends who he now depends on to help him through challenges.

“For the very first time in my life, I felt a sense of accomplishment. And

now, I'm hungry to overcome obstacles and feel that sense of accomplishment again and again. I never want to live without that feeling."

"Those experiences helped me understand that when I encounter a challenge at school, in my community, or even as I try to enter college, I have confidence in myself. And I know that I can lean on my friends and my Wyman coaches when I need help. With a little support, I can overcome anything," Orlando added.

Just this past summer, Orlando attended a 10-day college tour, visited 12 universities, and attended job trainings and job readiness programs so that he can someday realize his dream of attending college. Further, outside of Wyman, he participated in the Youth Futures Conference at the University of Missouri to participate in mock interviews and financial literacy sessions.

"I know I'm never done growing. It's one of the most important things I learned my first summer in the Teen Leadership Program."

Because of his own experiences growing academically and in his leadership skills, he believes that students have a lot to offer the school, and he's working to bring those improvements to life as a member of Cardinal Ritter's "President's Task Force" and as a Student Ambassador. He also manages the school's basketball and football teams and, for the 2017-2018 school year, Orlando has been named "Mr. Cardinal Ritter."

Although Orlando was faced with formidable circumstances that could

have derailed his success, he is achieving educational success and gaining the life and leadership skills to thrive. Although only 89 percent of students graduate high school in Missouri, teens in Wyman's programs are progressing to the next grade level, graduating on time, and entering colleges at rates vastly exceeding their peers.

Orlando has his sights set on attending college in the fall of 2019, as a major in Education Administration, bridging his leadership and advocacy skills to his passion for education. When he graduates, he will be a first-generation college student.

"All of my leadership experiences made my heart sing. As an education administrator, I will use the leadership skills I learned with Wyman to encourage other students to believe in themselves, reach outside of their comfort zones and help them build the skills they need to succeed."

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 more than a century. 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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<http://wymancer.org>

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