



# WILKES YOUTH LIFE DEVELOPMENT

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## WYLD

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## ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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## **LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

My name is Luke Jarvis, and I am the founding Executive Director of WYLD. When we first started WYLD one of our primary objectives was to give youth a platform for their voices to be heard in our community. We wanted them to know that they have a voice in Wilkes County and that their voice matters. We wanted to be able to provide them with opportunities to serve their peers, lead their peers, and help them grow into healthy and resilient adults. A community is nothing without its youth, and we are so fortunate that we have the opportunity to work hand in hand with our future leaders and empower them to know that they are truly in control of their future. We would not be able to do our work without our community partners and supporters. Thank you for trusting us to work with our local youth and support them as they become the best versions of themselves.



# MISSION

WILKES YOUTH LIFE DEVELOPMENT (WYLD) IS A YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATION WHOSE MISSION IS TO DEVELOP HEALTHY AND RESILIENT YOUTH IN WILKES COUNTY SO THAT THEY HAVE THE SKILLS AND SUPPORT TO BECOME MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY FIT ADULTS. OUR MISSION STANDS ON FOUR PILLARS THAT DETERMINE OUR PROGRAMS: MODELING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS, BUILDING POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS, PROVIDING MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES, AND CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION THROUGH STRONG GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.





# OUR TEAM



**KATHERINE JOHNSTON**

Meet Katherine, who has been on a remarkable journey from volunteer to an invaluable member of our team, serving as our Program Director. Her commitment to our cause began in the Fall of 2022, and she has since become an indispensable force within our organization. Hailing from the heart of Wilkes County, Katherine possesses a keen insight into the needs of our local youth. Katherine's vision is nothing short of transformative: she envisions a community where our children not only thrive but soar, surrounded by unwavering support and flourishing in healthy environments. Her journey is an inspiration, challenging us all to join her in creating a brighter future for the youth of Wilkes County.



**ALEENA SIDDIQI**

Meet Aleena, our dedicated Teen Action Council (TAC) President. Serving in her second year in this role, Aleena is nothing short of remarkable. Her visions for TAC and our community have been the driving force behind many of our successes in the last two years. Aleena is passionate about giving our youth a voice, helping them find their reason and giving them an outlet in our community.

## WYLD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jane Casarez- Board President, Non-Profit Professional  
Jessica Hammer- Board Secretary, Mental Health Professional  
Angel Bell- Board Member, School Social Worker  
Angela Reins- Board Member, Business Owner  
Bryan Terry- Board Member, NC Highway Patrol  
Jeff Walker - Board Member, Substance Use Professional  
Mike Lipford- Board Member, Business Owner  
Thomas Salley- Board Member, Wilkesboro  
Luke Jarvis- ex officio



# TEEN ACTION COUNCIL

The Teen Action Council (TAC) is a youth-led, adult-guided coalition that strives to create youth connections, provide community outreach, and support youth advocacy. TAC youth educate their peers in hopes to prevent substance misuse and mental health challenges. They do this by working together as a team to plan and implement activities.

TAC accomplishes their mission by;

**GIVING YOUTH A VOICE, PROVIDING YOUTH AN OUTLET, AND SHOWING YOUTH THEIR REASON.**

TAC focuses on facilitating accessible and open community collaboration between sectors in order to create a well-trained prevention-focused team, and optimize the amount of youth being served through TAC. TAC focuses on engaging youth and families in evidence-based prevention activities to increase the knowledge and preparation of the target population to make substance-free choices. TAC addresses youth substance use by engaging the target population, youth, in the planning and implementation of strategies and activities. By providing training opportunities such as the CADCA National Leadership Forum, Teen Leadership Summit, and training on the Strategic Prevention Framework Model, we are creating a youth prevention workforce in Wilkes. This workforce is vital in reducing/preventing substance use issues among youth by discovering and appropriately addressing the local conditions that are driving substance use.

## ADULT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At the beginning of the year we saw TAC making big moves in the community. So, we convened a panel of adult stakeholders in our community in order to guide and advise TAC. We felt that alongside these adults, our teens would have the resources needed to make Wilkes a better place for our youth.

These members bring a variety of experience to our youth. We have local business owners, healthcare workers, public safety employees, members of local churches and educators to bring ideas and support to our teens.

### 2023 ADULT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chief Tommy Rhoads - Law Enforcement

Kelly Shumate - Business

Chris Cochran - Law Enforcement

Lakyn Cochran - Schools

Jared Shumate - Media

Taylor Stanley - State/Local Government

Brandon Call - Health Care Professional

Trevor Royal - Religious

Shirl Daemer - Youth Serving

Haley Bell - Youth Serving

Amanda Hooper - Other Substance Use Professional

Jessica Osborne - Parent

Taylor Gann - Civic/Volunteer

Jessica Hammer - Health Care Professional



## PEACH FESTIVAL

WYLD volunteers attended the Peach Festival where they distributed over 50 medication lockboxes and disposal kits along with educational materials to improve medication safety in Wilkes.

## CORNHOLE

We continued our Cornhole Tournament fundraising series through October 2022. Through our fundraising series, we raised \$6,118.



## RACETRACK REVIVAL

WYLD volunteers worked at The North Wilkesboro Speedway during the Racetrack Revival in August. Volunteers parked cars and raised \$5,000 to support WYLD activities and initiatives.

## BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

In partnership with the Downtown Wilkesboro Merchants' Association, WYLD hosted the 2nd annual Back to School Bash where we provided school supplies to over 250 youth to ensure a successful start to the 2022-2023 school year.



## YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS

In September, Teen Action Council members hosted focus groups for youth at Dom Bakeries to determine needs and perceptions around youth mental health and substance use challenges with 15 youth participants.



## SPOOKTACULAR AND

## TRAIL OF TREATS

Youth and volunteers distributed candy and 200 medication lockboxes to Wilkes County youth and families during the Towns Halloween festivities.



## LIGHT UP DOWNTOWN

TAC partnered with local businesses to secure sponsorships for photo backdrops to be used during Light Up Downtown. These backdrops provided opportunities for families to come together for photo opportunities and was a great fundraiser for TAC raising almost \$1,500.





## TEEN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST-AID

In December, Luke participated in the teen Mental Health First Aid facilitator training with funding support from the Wilkes Community Foundation. As a facilitator, Luke will be able to train youth ages 15-18 to recognize and respond to mental health challenges among their peers



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

WYLD raised money to provide overnight stays for individuals and families who did not have adequate housing during the extreme cold front that came through over Christmas. In partnership with Wilkes Recovery Revolution, Inc., we were able to ensure 42 individuals had access to sufficient shelter.



## NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FORUM

Through scholarships from CADCA and Community Impact NC we were able to take four TAC members to National Harbor, MD where they were able to learn from youth and adults from across the country as well as go to Capitol Hill and speak with our senators about issues they feel are important in Wilkes County.



## SPAGHETTI DINNER

In less than two weeks, TAC secured donations from several local businesses to host a Valentine's Day spaghetti dinner fundraiser where they were able to raise \$700.

## TAC'LIN THE WYLD LIFE

Teen Action Council members started a podcast to create a safe space for youth to talk and share about their life experiences. To date, they have released 11 episodes that have reached over 250 youth.

## SPF - RX

In March 2023, WYLD received a \$31,263 multi-year grant through the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to address prescription drug misuse.



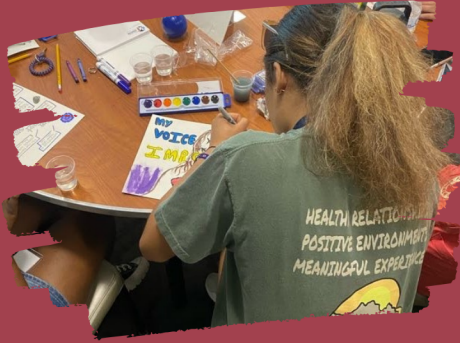


## SOR - III

In May 2023, WYLD received a \$100,000 multi-year grant through the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to address youth opioid misuse through the Reconnecting Youth and Celebrating Families! programs.

## MERLEFEST

WYLD had two different volunteer opportunities arise during Merlefest. We were able to partner with Merlefest to conduct traffic control to protect pedestrians entering and leaving the festival. We also had the opportunity to park cars in the American Specialty Windows parking lot. In total, we were able to raise \$4,000 during Merlefest weekend.



## CYCLOVIA

TAC hosted a Bikeswap during Cyclovia where kids and adults could swap their old bikes or get a bike if they did not have one. They were able to get five bikes donated to provide to the community.



## WYLD - AF (ALCOHOL FREE)

In partnership with The Block, TAC hosted four after prom parties, where they had 606 kids come out to skate, play gellyball, and spend time with friends after prom. 475 kids also signed a pledge saying they would abstain from drugs and alcohol on prom night.



## TEEN LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Seven members of TAC attended the annual Teen Leadership Summit hosted by Teen Health Connections in Charlotte, NC. Two of our kids were able to serve on staff and two kids were elected to serve on the Youth Impact NC state coalition.

## LOCK YOUR MEDS

WYLD continued promoting the NC Lock Your Meds campaign to inform community members about the importance of safely storing and disposing of prescription medications.



## OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDING

In June, we officially received \$11,000 through the Opioid Settlement funding to expand the teen Mental Health First Aid program to all local high schools.



**"WYLD HELPED ME UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND HOW THEY COULD IMPACT MY LIFE POSITIVELY. BEING AROUND PEOPLE THAT WANT TO MAKE A CHANGE IN THE COMMUNITY HAS HELPED ME GROW AS A PERSON."**

**-PRISHA PARIKH, TEEN ACTION COUNCIL MEMBER**

**"TAC MEANS AN OPPORTUNITY. A SAFE PLACE WHERE I CAN GROW AND BE MYSELF. TAC IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY LIFE THAT HELPED ME GROW AND IS THE REASON I WANT TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN IN MY COMMUNITY. TAC IS AN INSPIRATION THAT THERE WILL BE A BETTER TOMORROW AND THE HOPE I CAN CHANGE AT LEAST ONE PERSON'S LIFE FOR THE BETTER"**

**-KIMBERLY RUIZ SALAZAR,  
TEEN ACTION COUNCIL MEMBER**

# THE ONES WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE!

## **Youth Guardian (\$20,000+)**

Anonymous Donor

## **Youth Empowerment (\$5,000 - \$9,999)**

In Memory of Clate Edsel  
The Leonard G. Herring Family Foundation  
The Print Shop  
XR Racing Event

## **Youth Promise (\$1,000 - \$4,999)**

AMZ Entertainment  
Angela Reins  
Anonymous Donor  
Mark and Jodi Jarvis  
North Wilkesboro Speedway  
Wilkes Community College Foundation  
Wilkes Communications

We are only able to serve youth  
because we have people  
like you who support us!  
THANK YOU!!



Scan here to donate now!

## **Youth Friend (\$1-\$999)**

Angela Day  
Angie Taylor  
Autumn Nichols  
Bhavik Patel  
Bob Nichols  
Brandi & Gabby  
Brandon Berry  
Bridal Traditions Wedding & Prom Attire  
Cary Johnson  
Created by Coffee Designs  
David Wingler  
Deborah Kearsing  
Denise Greene  
Dom Bakeries  
ECMD  
Fishing Creek Arbor Baptist Church  
Fred Costello  
Frontier Natural Gas  
Grant & Molly Roberts

Gwen Dowell  
In Memory of Lisa Ruth Wood  
Jane Casarez  
Jordan Forsythe  
Judy Snyder  
Kate Curchin  
Ken Noland  
Kensley Green  
Keyton Greene  
Kim Hefner  
Kyle Gann  
Linda Cheek  
Liz Henderson  
Luke Jarvis  
Matt Matthews  
Megan & Jeff  
Melanie Nichols  
Micah Dunlevy  
Michelle Sloop

Mike Lipford  
Mike Perkins  
Morgan Sturgill  
Pat Melton  
Randy Pennell  
Rodney Phillips  
Suzanne Moore  
Talia Espresso  
Taupe  
Taylor Gann  
The Animal Hospital of Wilkes  
The Rutherford's  
Thomas Salley  
Tommy Phillips  
Town of North Wilkesboro  
Town of Ronda  
Town of Wilkesboro  
Wilkesboro Tourism Development Authority



# 2023 GRANT FUNDING

NC DHHS: SOR III - \$100,000

NC DHHS: SPF Rx - \$31,263

Community Impact NC: CAT III - \$15,000

Wilkes Medical Center Foundation - \$25,708

Wilkes Community Foundation - \$1,500

## 2023 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Children's Center of Northwest NC

Community Impact NC

Crossroads Harley Davidson

Dom Bakeries

Nina's

The Block

The Health Foundation

The Print Shop

Town of North Wilkesboro

Town of Ronda

Town of Wilkesboro

US Army Corps of Engineers

VAYA Health

Wilkes Family YMCA

Wilkes Chamber of Commerce

Wilkes Community College

Wilkes County Cooperative Extension

Wilkes County Schools

Wilkes Recovery Revolution

# WHAT'S UP NEXT...

**Space:** WYLD is actively looking for a permanent place to call home. When we first started, we bounced from coffee shop to coffee shop and met with youth in the upstairs of Dom Bakeries. In June we moved into The Masthead and have been able to call it home for the past few months. With TAC expanding rapidly and the need for after-school youth programs, we feel that moving into our own facility will allow us to grow our impact on Wilkes County youth.

**Van:** Transportation is a huge need across our community and that need has become even more obvious when working with youth. From needing a ride from school to weekly meetings to heading to Washington, D.C. for leadership training, finding transportation has been a continued challenge. Everytime we need a 15 passenger van for an event, we have had to look outside of Wilkes and the rental fees have been extremely high. We believe that the addition of a van will enable us to expand and enhance our ability to best serve youth.

**Food Truck:** We are currently planning a multi-prong social impact program to support youth workforce development using a unique approach to the food insecurity issue in our community. Utilizing a pay what you can model will cultivate a needed service for those negatively impacted by food insecurity while also allowing youth to serve their community with a sense of pride and ownership.

**THANK YOU TO THE PRINT SHOP  
FOR YOUR CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP + SUPPORT.**



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