



# FosterClub



## **Weston Charles - Gallo**

2 years in Missouri Child Welfare System

21 years old

He/him/his

Weston entered the foster care system at age 14 when his biological parents neglected him for identifying as gay. Weston experienced hospitalizations, shelters, and foster home placements. After 1 year in the system Weston forever family came into his life, his two dads and six siblings.

Currently, Weston is attending Pittsburg State University, majoring in communications with an emphasis in human communication. He is also an LGBTQ youth advocate for foster youth, highlighting the importance of same-sex couples to foster and adopt. A member of the Youth Speak Out Team in KCMO( Kansas City, Missouri), which works to raise awareness of the experiences of foster youth and the challenges they face. Weston worked alongside the Youth Speak Out team on a Bill of Rights for Foster Care Youth and in the summer of 2017; the Governor of Missouri passed and signed the bill. Weston served as a Youth Ambassador for the Human Rights Campaign, where he continued to share his journey and lived experience raising awareness for LGBTQ issues that youth face across the country. Honored with the FosterClub Outstanding Young Leader Award for his continuous work advocating for foster care youth in the LGBTQ community. Weston now is a part of an advocacy leadership team working to pass the Every Child Deserves A Family Act as well as becoming a spokesperson for the Adopt US Kids speakers bureau. Weston has been featured on NBC News, Yahoo News, Proud Parenting, and USA today.

“In the future, I plan to be working in political communication in DC on capitol hill, with a focus on LGBTQ+ and Foster Care Youth affairs before I run for Member of Congress.”



**Natalie Nicole Clark**

6 years in Utah's Foster Care System

22 years old

She/her/hers

Natalie spent about 6 years in Utah's foster care system between the ages of 3 and 18; she had too many placements to keep track - especially during her teenage years. Natalie is a full-time Social work student at the University of Utah. She teaches basic life skills classes at the Department of Children and Family Services through a non-profit organization called Reach360; that provides activity grants to youth in foster care, On the side, Natalie drives for Lyft and is a photographer. She has participated on her local and state advisory councils for many years with the goal of educating and informing the legislature on Utah's foster care system. Currently, she serves as the presiding President of the Salt Lake region and the Utah State Advisory Board. Natalie will work for the Department of Children and Family Services once she completes her Bachelor's degree by the summer of 2021.

Natalie's passion and motivation for advocacy within the foster care system is derived from her many years of experiencing a "broken system." Natalie is hopeful - while she experienced and observed the many flaws behind designating government and state agencies to raise children; she knows the strength of lived experience in changing the way things work for future generations of foster youth. Natalie's dream jobs include: be an individual trauma therapist for youth in foster care and victims of sexual assault, running a non-profit transitional living apartment complex for youth aging out of the foster care system, and being a foster parent for teens.

"It's not what you've been through in your life that defines. It's not what you've been through in your life that defines who you are, it's how you got through it that has made you the person you are today. Sometimes you have to get knocked down lower than you've ever been, to stand up taller than you ever were."