

Meet the Fearless, Funny, Fabulous Shalawn Mayfield

One of ILO's Fantastic Community Builders



Shalawn is the Community Builder for Gaithersburg and DC. She has 10 years of experience supporting individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness, substance abuse, and mental illness. Specializing in mental health advocacy, Shalawn is committed to helping people through various journeys of life.

By focusing on mental health awareness, Shalawn has been able to put her mental health and psychology education earned at UMUC and Montgomery College to effective use

1. What do you like about working for ILO?

One of the things I can say I like about ILO is the community.....how we come together, the staff comes together. And we know what's going on with ILO. Transparency. The staff is trustworthy and that's something I haven't really experienced. I feel like ILO is a place where you can be vulnerable. Even with the SAs....how we can input ideas and make suggestions. Even how the parents come together and support each other. ILO is the best!

2. What do you think about the co-workers you are working with?

I LOVE THEM! I LOVE THEM! I like how we can pull on [lean on] each other. We all communicate with each other and we know what is going on with each other's SAs. No one is here for just a paycheck. This team is here because they care. It's beyond being just co-workers. We're vulnerable with one another.

3. Do you feel like you are part of a team?

Definitely! And that's the thing. You guys make sure that we are included. We are always included in implementing ideas and how we want ILO to move forward. We aren't just minions. *(To the right: Shalawn and Michelle Harris (another ILO CB) with SAs at The Rage Room.)*



4. What do you think about ILO's program goals and vision for the young adults and their families – is it worthwhile? Is it realistic?

As far as program goals I think they're really good. I like how we do the meetings to build community and the one-on-ones as well to help encourage the SAs to build community and work on the goals they want to work on. I would like for the SAs to be able to make up some of their own goals.

5. How do you like working with the self-advocates? What do you find most challenging, what is most rewarding?

I love working with the SAs!! The most rewarding thing is when I see them accomplish a goal or become more independent. The independent piece I absolutely love. When an SA cleans their own apartment without having to be told – they do it themselves and take pride. When the SAs start doing things on their own – reaching out to a fellow SA or going to get something to eat on their own. It's rewarding seeing them open up.

The challenge is getting the SAs to do community events. It's like pulling teeth. They have to be reminded of the importance of getting out of the house and being social. It's hard to get them to come together sometimes.



6. What would be one or two tips you would give other community builders?

To think outside the box when it comes to coming up with ideas for things to do with the SAs. Be creative. Be patient. Building rapport with some of the SAs takes time but once you get it, it's beautiful. It takes consistency and patience.



7. What are your interests and passions, hopes and dreams?

Hopes and dreams are I hope I'm helping to raise my grandchildren properly. I want to be a good mentor and positive role model for my grandchildren. That is the most important thing to me right now. Separately my goal is to go back to school and get licensed to further my career.