



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
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ADVOCATING FOR HERSELF AND OTHERS

Youth in Government National Advocacy Days RETTA'S STORY

Across the nation, students participate in YMCA Youth in Government. The program aims to enable young people to prepare for leadership through participatory training in the theory and practice of determining public policy. Retta Isaacson has been involved in Eau Claire's David Duax YMCA Youth in Government program for three years. While her friends were the initial reason why she joined, she soon saw that the other youth involved weren't afraid to advocate for themselves, and she was hooked.

In March of 2017, Retta traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with congressmen, senators, and other government officials to talk about how the Y positively impacts our community. "This was to encourage them to keep the Y in mind when making changes to the budget," Retta said. "It was our job to connect these ideas with real human stories and the communities we represent."

While in Washington, Retta had the opportunity to meet other YMCA representatives from across the country. She got to meet Youth Advocates from small towns and big cities alike, and everyone had a unique story to share. It was a little intimidating when they were in front of all of the Y board members and CEOs, she said, but after a little while, everyone was able to fit in and advocate for themselves.

For Retta, what initially was something to do with her friends has turned into a program that's very meaningful for her. "The program surrounded me with great peers and amazing role models," Retta said. "But it also taught me how to speak up for myself and others. Youth in Government taught me how to be my own person and to not be afraid to show who that is to the world."

