



August 2026 Newsletter



A Message from IDN Executive Director Dr. Barb Brady

Back to School and Looking Ahead!

As a new school year begins, backpacks are filled, classrooms come alive, and young people step into a season of new beginnings, opportunities, and challenges. For educators, youth-serving professionals, caregivers, and families, it's a time to reconnect, build relationships, and create spaces where every young person feels safe, seen, supported, and ready to thrive. At Inspiring Dreams Network, we believe that **when we equip the adults who surround young people, we strengthen the entire community.**

Back-to-School Resources

Our free [Youth Development Portal](#) continues to grow with practical, trauma-informed resources for youth, families, educators, and professionals.

This month, explore new resources focused on:

- **Mental health & well-being:** NAMI resources to help students and educators navigate stress and protect mental health.
- **Safe, connected classrooms:** Trauma-informed strategies for building trust, connection, and emotional safety.
- **Balance & burnout prevention:** Tools to help students manage academics, activities, family responsibilities, and self-care.
- **Whole-student support:** ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors resources supporting academic, social-emotional, and personal growth.

Visit the [IDN Youth Development Portal](#) and explore resources to help make this school year one of connection, resilience, and growth.

Building the Future of Learning with IDN

We're also excited to welcome a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA who will help IDN update our training materials and resources and support development of our online

learning platform.

Our vision is an online learning portal providing 24/7 access to IDN's self-paced, evidence-informed training course, giving youth-serving adults the flexibility to learn anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace.

This is an exciting step forward in making high-quality professional learning more accessible, flexible, and relevant to the adults who support young people every day.

Thank you for being part of the Inspiring Dreams Network and for helping us build stronger networks of adults who inspire, prepare, and support young people to thrive.

Here's to a new school year—and an exciting new chapter for IDN!

With appreciation,

Dr. Barb Brady, Executive Director, Inspiring Dreams Network

Upcoming IDN Trainings

These FREE training opportunities are provided through funding from The Claude Worthington Benedum, Milan Puskar, and Greater Kanawha Valley Foundations. We appreciate our partnerships with these organizations.

Keep Them Safe: Suicide Safety Planning & Lethal Means Accessibility Conversations

Date: August 26, 2026 | 1:00pm-4:00pm

Location: Zoom

Trainers: Michelle Toman & Barri Faucett

Description: Keep Them Safe is an interactive, evidence-based training that teaches participants how to have compassionate, honest conversations with individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts. The training focuses on developing personalized safety plans, recognizing suicide risk, reducing access to lethal means, strengthening coping strategies and support systems, and creating a safe, trusting environment that promotes connection and helps prevent suicide.

Learning Objectives: Participants will...

- learn to collaboratively develop an individualized safety plan for individuals at-risk for suicide.
- be introduced to effective communication techniques for initiating and navigating conversations about access to lethal means.
- learn techniques of applying best practices for safety planning and reducing accessibility to lethal means when suicide risk is present.

LPC CEUs and STARS credit offered! Addictions, Nursing, and Social Work CEUs Pending!



If you wish to receive STARS credit, **please register on the STARS Portal**
www.wvstars.org

Register Here!

Interested in IDN providing a training for your organization? Check out our [Training Menu](#) and complete our [Training Request Form](#)!

What Else is Up With IDN?



WV's Promise Youth Alliance Inc.

Help Us Welcome Aurora: A New Chapter for IDN



We're excited to welcome Aurora Loudin into a new chapter of her journey with Inspiring Dreams Network (IDN)! After serving as our **Summer Associate VISTA**, Aurora transitioned to a **full-time AmeriCorps VISTA role** on August 10, beginning a year of service through August 9, 2027.

Aurora's transition marks an exciting turning point for IDN as we strengthen our training infrastructure, expand our reach, and build new ways to equip the adults who support young people across West Virginia. In her new role, Aurora will help shape the future of IDN's training initiatives by elevating our training materials through stronger branding, thoughtful design, and engaging resources that are consistent, accessible, impactful, and aligned with our mission.

One of the most exciting developments ahead is **IDN's online learning platform**. Aurora will play a key role in helping us develop self-paced training units that give our network 24/7 access to professional development, whenever and wherever their schedules allow. The platform will also create opportunities for participants to earn CEUs, making high-quality training more accessible to the educators, youth-serving professionals, and community members who are already working hard to support young people.

Aurora will also collaborate closely with our **Training and Development Team** to intentionally bring student voice into our training development. By listening to and learning from young people, we can ensure our courses remain innovative, relevant, and responsive to the realities facing youth and the adults who serve them. In addition, Aurora will work alongside our current VISTA, Laren Iezzi, supporting training development, promotion, and delivery as well as communicating with our growing network and supporting other initiatives that will help IDN expand its impact.

This is more than a new position; it's an investment in IDN's future. We are building the capacity, technology, and resources needed to reach more adults, strengthen more communities, and ultimately **help more young people thrive**.

Please join us in giving Aurora a warm welcome as she begins this exciting next chapter with IDN! **To learn more about her, check out her bio through the link below.**

[Read More](#)

Join Our Team! IDN Board Member Position Now Open

Inspiring Dreams Network is now accepting self-nominations for our Board of Directors. Join a mission-driven team working to strengthen youth resilience, community well-being, and systems that truly support young people. We're filling **one Board seat** and welcome leaders of all backgrounds—no prior Board experience required. Members serve a three-year term, meet monthly (virtual), and help guide IDN's strategy, values, and impact. Walk with us as we build a more supportive, youth-centered future.



Application deadline is September 15th.

For any questions, contact Dr. Barb Brady at drbarbbrady@inspiringdreamsnetwork.org

[Apply Here!](#)



IDN is excited to share a new collection of supports now available on our [Youth Development Portal](#), our free, trauma-informed hub for youth, families, educators, and professionals. The portal continues to grow with **practical, evidence-based tools** that help young people navigate identity, transition, and moments of challenge with confidence and care.

Our newest additions include two **NAMI** resources designed to help teens and young adults balance commitments, protect their mental health, and build supportive school environments, along with a comprehensive **ASCA** guide that equips educators with research-based mindsets and behaviors for fostering academic, social/emotional, and career readiness.

Together, these resources strengthen the portal's mission by offering structured planning tools, trauma-informed classroom strategies, and nationally recognized counseling standards that promote resilience, equity, and whole-student well-being.

[Three Keys for a Successful Back to School Transition](#)

Partner Updates

[Register Here!](#)



WV Statewide Afterschool Network Updates

Lights on Afterschool is October 22!

This nationwide celebration of afterschool programs, students, and staff is back for its 27th year- bringing together more than 8000 programs to showcase the important role afterschool plays in supporting youth, families, and communities.

Whether this will be your first Lights On Afterschool, or your 27th, please join the Afterschool Alliance **Lights on Afterschool 101 Webinar** on **September 9 at 2:00 PM** to discover new ideas and put a fresh spin on your event this year.

[Register for Webinar](#)

WVSAN Offers In-Person PD Sessions

As you prepare your afterschool team for an exciting new year of learning and engagement, explore professional development opportunities designed by WVSAN specifically for afterschool professionals. These interactive sessions offer practical, ready-to use strategies to help staff build strong relationships with students, create engaging learning environments, set meaningful program goals, and begin the school year with confidence.

PD Sessions Currently Available:

- **Quality Standards:** A 2-hour training offering an overview of the WV Afterschool Program Quality Standards, Assessment Tool, and how to develop a plan for program quality improvement. An all-day version of this training is also available.
- **Quality in Family and Community Engagement:** A 2-hour focus on the Family and Community Engagement Standard Domain, identifying community assets, and developing a plan to improve family and community engagement.
- **Career-Connected Learning Framework:** 1-2 hour training to help programs embed career awareness, exploration and preparation into activities in ways that are practical, age-appropriate, and grounded in both research and real-world relevance.

- **Advocacy:** 2-3 hour training learning what advocacy is, identifying local afterschool champions and stakeholders, creating advocacy messages for specific audiences, and elevating youth voice.

To schedule a Professional Development session, or to ask any questions, please reach out to Tami Jo Wilt, WVSAN Quality Program Coordinator at tjwilt@mail.wvu.edu.

Nonprofit 411 Upcoming Workshops

WV Nonprofit 411 supports nonprofit organizations in diversifying and expanding funding. Owner, Sarah Barton invites you to participate in the upcoming workshops.



Every Monday | 2:00-3:00pm

The Fundraising Roadmap Small Nonprofits Need

Description: In this free workshop, Sarah Barton from Nonprofit411 walks you through the Fundraising for Small Teams Roadmap — a 9-step framework designed to help small nonprofit teams move from scattered fundraising efforts to a structured system that builds reliable, recurring donor revenue.

Register Here!

"Caring for the Caregiver" Conference 2026

Save The Date

"Caring for the Caregiver" Conference



November 17-18, 2026

Embassy Suites Hotel
300 Court Street
Charleston, WV 25301

Metro Area Agency on Aging invites you to our FREE "Caring for the Caregiver Conference". This is an event for both family caregivers and provider agencies to gather and learn more about caregiving.

CEUs will be available

For more information contact:
Kim Young
kyoung@metroaaa.com
(304)720-6861



Complete Our Training Needs Survey!

Inspiring Dreams Network is excited to provide training and partner with you to better support the youth you serve. Help us serve you better by clicking the button above to complete our training needs survey.

[Training Needs Survey](#)

[Visit our Website](#)

If you have specific resource needs not available on our website, please contact Dr. Barb Brady at drbarbbrady@inspiringdreamsnetwork.org



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