



CHALLENGE



OVERCOME



ACHIEVE

**YLN<sup>i</sup>**  
**2020**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**

# Who we are



2020 was a year of adapting for everyone, and Young Leaders of Northeast Indiana (YLNI) were, and are, here to serve. We believe in investing in our community's future by utilizing our resources to help young people personally and professionally. Doing so reinforces connections between the people and communities we support. When people feel connected to their communities, they stay and invest their time and talent. YLNI is building a foundation of young leaders who will continue to work for Northeast Indiana's success.

Led by a team of committed volunteers, YLNI works to build a community where people want to live, work, and play. Our members are entrepreneurs, artists, business people, musicians, accountants, doctors, lawyers, teachers, students, and so much more. Our dedicated volunteers love Northeast Indiana, and their eagerness to share that passion makes our organization successful.

**"As someone who was sparked at the beginning of my career by an educator that really cared about me, it's been incredible to give that back... Talking to the students and exploring concepts with them of what their future might look like and how we can make those things a reality is by far one of the most rewarding things I've done in my professional career."**

**Aaron Robles**  
Co-Chair, Ignite Institute

# OUR MISSION

To attract, develop and retain emerging leaders through community, professional and social engagement.

# OUR VISION

Northeast Indiana is an attractive region influenced by diverse, emerging leaders who are engaged, inclusive and attached to their community.

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# OUR BOARD

YLNI relies on generosity, passion, and commitment. The Board of Directors consists of passionate leaders who volunteer their time to an organization with a mission and vision they believe in. These volunteers live and work in Northeast Indiana and believe in the power of investing in the community.

The Board of Directors is the governing body of YLNI and meets formally once a month. Their big-picture approach is to guide the organization to fulfill the mission. Some of their duties include approving activities, securing funding, and advocating for the organization's demographic.



**Savannah Robinson**  
President



**Chris Polhamus**  
Vice President



**Kyler Mills**  
Treasurer



**Meg Saxmann**  
Secretary



**Justin Hayes**  
Director at Large,  
Executive Committee



**Brandon Noll**  
Vice President,  
Community Impact



**Ian Broad-White**  
Vice President,  
Leadership Development



**Craig Fischer**  
Vice President,  
Membership



**David Curry**  
Vice President,  
Fund Development



**Tim Zink**  
Vice President,  
Communications



**Giang Petroviak**  
Vice President,  
Social Programming



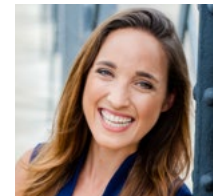
**Chelsea Wolpert**  
Director at Large,  
Community Impact



**Beth Johnson**  
Director at Large,  
Communications



**Marlies Zwepink**  
Director at Large,  
Technology



**Jessica Morales**  
Director at Large,  
Leadership Development



**John Hudson**  
Director at Large,  
Fund Development

# OUR CHAIRS

YLNI's committee chairs volunteer their time to help execute programming under the Board of Directors leadership. Each of them represents what it means to be an emerging young leader and help make a difference in the Northeast Indiana region.

"I first heard about YLNI from my boss... she knew that I had just moved to the area and was looking to make friends and suggested I get involved with YLNI right away. I first attended a Hot Spot and then looked into joining a committee to become more involved."

**Courtney Sullivan**  
Chair, Social Events

## COMMUNICATIONS

Sierra Grayson

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

- **Farmers Market**  
Ashley Wagner (Market Manager)  
Brad Springer, Su Vongphachanh

## FUND DEVELOPMENT

Clarissa Reis

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- **Power Lunch Series**  
James Couchman, Charl Franks
- **Ignite Institute**  
Aaron Robles, Taylor Hollister
- **Leadership Institute**  
Kristin Conley, Kelli Warner
- **NextGen Leadership Institute**  
Morgan Ferguson, Jennifer Simmons
- **High School Leadership Institute**  
Jessica Morales

## MEMBERSHIP

Lindsey Dutrieux

## LIVING FORT WAYNE

Britney Breidenstein, Jesus Rosario,  
Alex Modarressi

## SOCIAL

- **Hot Spots**  
Joey Seabolt, Rachel Batdorff, Adriane Roberts
- **Programming**  
Rachel Batdorff, Adriane Roberts
- **Community Roundtable**  
Carly Thompson
- **Social Events**  
Ryan Powell, Giang Petroviak, Courtney Sullivan
- **Signature Event**  
Kassee Lamm, Taylor Heath
- **Concert Series**  
Kat Erickson
- **MovedIN**  
Amanda Drakeford, Courtney Sullivan

# MEMBERSHIP



The Membership Committee works to increase member participation and engagement in our organization. The committee ensures that all members get the most out of their investment in YLNI. We believe an investment in YLNI is an investment in our community and the many programs we coordinate.

## General Membership Event

The General Membership Event connects current and future YLNI members to our Board of Directors and community leaders. The event acts as a celebration of our community's growth and our organization's accomplishments throughout the year. The 2020 event took place at Promenade Park Pavilion in July. We presented our 2020 Board of Directors and unveiled our Diversity and Inclusion efforts moving forward to current and prospective members.



**166**  
Dues Paying Members

**1,497**  
Prospective members  
receiving YLNI info



**“I enjoy meeting new people and hearing why they moved to or moved back to Fort Wayne. Not being from this area myself it is nice to hear everyone’s favorite places to eat, their favorite annual events, and learn how our community is so unique from the rest of the Midwest.”**

**Lindsey Dutrieux**  
Chair, Membership

**Committee Members** | Lindsey Dutrieux (chair), Anna Baer, Craig Fischer, Justin Stalter, Jacob Sweet

# COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

The communications and marketing committee's goal is to keep our members, community leaders, and local media informed on all the happenings of YLNI. They operate as the organization's outward voice and internally support the programs and committees dedicated to fulfilling YLNI's mission. The committee oversees all social media channels, press releases, media relations, and much more.



**2,365**  
newsletter  
subscribers  
**+404** from 2019



**3,652** followers  
**+191** from 2019



**3,800** followers  
**-34** from 2019



**1,552** followers  
**+207** from 2019



**975** followers  
**+235** from 2019

YLNI's top Instagram posts for the year were all surrounding the leadership and growth of YLNI:

- 115** Board of Directors Intro
- 114** Winter Market Announcement
- 65** Leadership Institute Group Photo
- 57** General Membership Event Announcement
- 56** NextGen Leadership Institute Graduates

# LIVING FORT WAYNE™

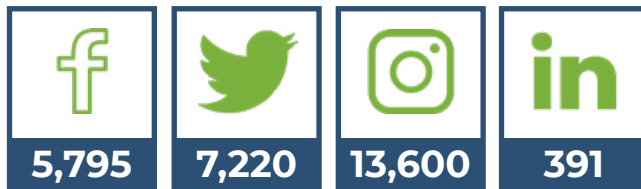
Living Fort Wayne (LivingFortWayne.com) is your go-to place for information on all things that keep our vibrant city buzzing. The goal is to provide information on happenings, history, and the people that run our local businesses and events.

In 2020, Living Fort Wayne developed the #FortWayneTogether hashtag campaign to raise awareness about local businesses and organizations' updates in response to COVID-19.

In an effort to help raise money and support the needs presented by local restaurants and bars affected by COVID-19, Living Fort Wayne partnered with Headwaters Lifestyle Co. to design and produce "Fort Wayne Together" t-shirts. While making their purchase, buyers could select which local restaurant or bar they wanted their donation to go towards.

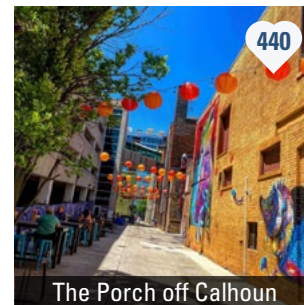
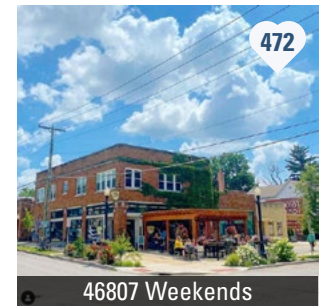
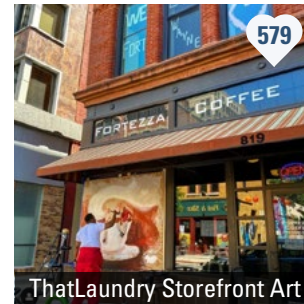
Depending on COVID-19 restrictions, Living Fort Wayne is hoping to host a "Fort Wayne Together" day during the outdoor 2021 YLNI Farmers Market season.

## Social Media Engagement



## Instagram Post Engagement

@LivingFortWayne highlighted various aspects of our vibrant city. Here are the top 10!







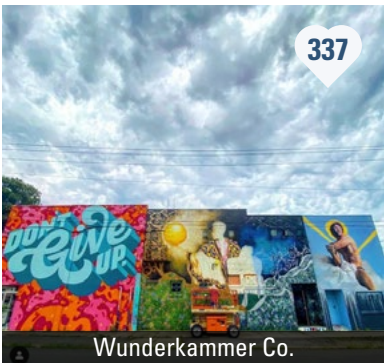
389

Santa Light Display



358

Lakeside Park



337

Wunderkammer Co.



317

Freimann Square

Anish Kalliguddi, Brandon Roberts, Tim Zink

# TECHNOLOGY



MENU



Emerging leaders start here.

Attracting, developing and retaining young leaders in Northeast Indiana since 2004.

Make your voice heard: Get involved today.



## Website Stats:

~2,000 sessions per month

## Top Pages Visited:

YLNI Farmers Market

My City Summit

Board of Directors

Leadership Institute

Market Vendors

Committee Members | Aaron Prentice (chair), Nicholas Berger, Sarah Verpooten, Marlies Zwepink

# FUND DEVELOPMENT

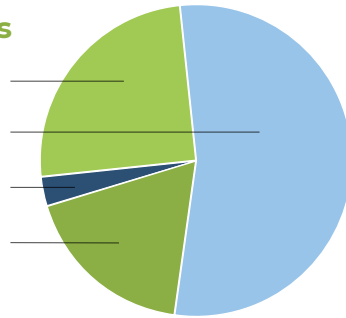


Each of YLNI's committees is self-sufficient and self-reliant. All funding received directly impacts YLNI's programming and initiatives.

When you support YLNI, your financial contribution supports Northeast Indiana's community, professional, and social development.

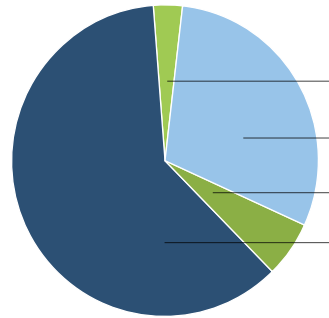
## Funding Sources

Grants **25%**  
 Programming **54%**  
 Membership **3%**  
 Sponsorship **18%**



## Funding By Program

Membership **3%**  
 Leadership Development **30%**  
 Operating Expenses **6%**  
 Community Impact **61%**



Without the support of our donors, our efforts to attract, develop, and retain top talent in our community wouldn't be possible.

Their contributions have provided YLNI the ability to have a larger voice within our community and region.

- 3Rivers Federal Credit Union
- Barnes & Thornburg LLP
- Belmont Beverage
- Canterbury School
- Edward M. & Mary McCrea Wilson Foundation
- English-Bonter-Mitchell Foundation
- Foellinger Foundation
- Howard P. Arnold Foundation, Inc.
- JH Specialty
- Lake City Bank
- Lincoln Financial
- NIPSCO
- Northwestern Mutual (Matthew Henry)
- Old Fort Soap Company
- PNC Bank
- Pro Resources
- Rea Magnet Wire
- Superior Auto
- Sweetwater
- Strahm Building Solutions
- Windows, Doors & More



The YLNI Farmers Market on Barr Street continued their partnership with The History Center for the 16th outdoor season. Despite a delayed start, many challenges, and numerous safety considerations, the market was voted the 2020 Readers' Choice Best Farmers Market for the second year running by Fort Wayne Newspapers. With the market being considered 'essential,' we were able to help local vendors remain open and provide revenue for many who were struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Every Saturday from May through September, more than 120 local vendors, non-profits, partner organizations, and musicians could feature their products and skills. Despite the challenges, more than 3,000 people visited the market to support their favorite local vendors each week.

## SUMMER MARKET STATS



**30** volunteers with more than  
**350** volunteer hours



**100** total local vendors including **20** new  
Weekly average of **66**



Hosted **12** food trucks



Partnered with **10** local non-profits

The YLNI Board, market committee, and volunteers made a conscious effort to ensure everyone's safety each weekend. Some of the items that were incorporated included:

- Hand sanitizer stations;
- Adjusting the layout to encourage social distancing;
- Mask requirements; and
- Offered delivery and pick-up options through local delivery services.

These efforts continued when we introduced the new Winter Market at the historic Aunt Millie's Bread Factory on Pearl Street, thanks to a partnership with Sweetwater. The Winter Market runs every Saturday from October to April, extending the market season through the colder months. For its inaugural season, the winter market averaged 50 vendors and 950 visitors each week.

## NEW WINTER MARKET STATS



**8** volunteers with more than  
**75** volunteer hours



**85** total local vendors including **31** new  
Weekly average of **50**



Partnered with **2** local non-profits

### Committee Members

Ashley Wagner (market manager), Brad Springer (chair), Su Vongphachanh (chair), Marshall Deeds, Jessica Hockemeyer, Hannah Janssen, Nicole Jennings, Zac Jennings, Beth Johnson

# COMMUNITY IMPACT



YLNI continues to work directly with our community leaders to provide a young leader's perspective and engage in active discussions on several issues. We have quarterly meetings with the Mayor and attend city council meetings to stay current on local happenings.



## Inclusion, Diversity & Advocacy Committee

Following the civil unrest in Fort Wayne this year, the YLNI board unanimously decided to make purposeful and constant efforts to combat inequality in our community. They did so by creating a 10-member committee, the Inclusion, Diversity, and Advocacy Committee (IDA), whose purpose is to act as a conduit of influence through committee members sitting on various community boards and committees.

This committee's mission is to educate YLNI members about issues that affect the community, especially the young leaders demographic. In keeping with this mission, the committee reviews public policy issues, community initiatives, and other pertinent issues and makes recommendations to the YLNI Board of Directors. In addition to education, the committee's goals are to strengthen relationships between our members, the community, and public officials while creating awareness of legislation and advocating for YLNI members.

## Tough Talks

IDA introduced Tough Talks to create a safe space for community leaders of all ages and backgrounds to engage in authentic conversations on several difficult topics to foster more inclusivity and understanding in our region. We seek to listen and understand because when we know better, we can do better.

We were able to facilitate three Tough Talks in 2020, two in-person and one virtual. On average, more than 20 people attended and engaged with the diverse group of panel members at each event. We plan on hosting Tough Talks monthly in 2021 and will be tackling topics and sub-topics relating to:

- Race
- Religion
- LGBTQ+
- Dating and sex
- Immigration
- Gender issues
- Political polarization
- Socioeconomics
- Mental health



# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



## Power Lunch Series

The Power Lunch Series aims to put young leaders in the room with influential community leaders for an intimate conversation. The 2020 Power Lunch series took place once a month from August through November. Four groups of five YLNI members had the unique opportunity to meet with one community leader for lunch. This personal interaction provides leaders with an opportunity to share experiences and ask questions candidly. By meeting with the same group each month during the series, each group has a chance to build lasting relationships with one another.

### 2020 Community Leaders

#### **Melissa Dessaigne**

Executive Director,  
Mad Anthony's Children's Hope House

#### **Leslie Friedel**

CEO, Visiting Nurse

#### **Tabitha Ervin**

Executive Director,  
Jackson R Lehman Family YMCA

#### **Curtis Smith**

Director of Community Outreach,  
Parkview Health

**Power Lunch Co-Chairs** | James Couchman, Charl Franks

## Ignite Institute

YLNI and Founders Spark introduced the Ignite Institute; a two-year program focused on leadership and entrepreneurship for young adults in Fort Wayne. This program filled a gap in education and resources for this particular demographic and enabled them to start a thriving business and maintain it sustainably. The cohort learned various fundamental skills to help them build and scale a successful business and connect them to people and organizations in our region to support their continued success after program completion. The inaugural class included 14 entrepreneurs ranging in age from 15-22. The group was 50% male and 50% female, 43% Black, 36% White, 14% Hispanic, and 7% mixed.

During June and July, the class met virtually for educational workshops each week to learn about CliftonStrengths, legal matters, marketing, finance, and personal development. They also heard from other local entrepreneurs about some of their successes and failures while building their businesses. The students were paired with a mentor and will continue working with them until part two of the Ignite Institute program in June 2021.

### Class of 2020-2021

**Alexa Silva**

**Amelia Turnbull**

**Amir Pierre-Louise**

**Ani'a Walker**

**Carter Bonecutter**

**Jaden Gonzalez**

**Jaelynn Hinton**

**LaDarius Griggs**

**Landen Cobble**

**Luis Aldave**

**Rachelle McCoy**

**Romeo Morris**

**Tyler Hunter**

**Zoe Spalding**

**Ignite Institute Co-Chairs** | Aaron Robles & Taylor Hollister



## Leadership Institute

YLNI's signature Leadership Institute connects young professionals with their peers and their community to advance their career skills. Through hands-on instruction, small group activities, personal reflection, and sharing, participants develop skills needed to help them grow in their careers and community.

2020 marked the 15th year of the Leadership Institute. The class consisted of 42 young leaders from 35 Northeast Indiana companies. They completed five day-long sessions from January to April, covering topics from personality recognition and communication effectiveness to board stewardship and diversity in the workplace. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the final session had to be canceled.

Still, the graduates were able to celebrate completing the program and all they accomplished with a graduation celebration at Hop River Brewing Co. in August.

**"I learned so much about myself and met so many great people (and animals) through the Leadership Institute. I love that I now have the opportunity to help new classes do the same."**

**Kristin Conley**  
Co-Chair, Leadership Institute

## Class of 2020

Amanda Leffler	Jessica Neueschwander
Beth Williams	John Nichter
Bethany Sutherland	Josh Hohman
Brandon Curry	Joshua Burt
Brian Rash	Katie Hartford
Brittney Keairnes	Katie Hibel
Carly Thompson-Memmer	Kayla Brumett
Carrie Miller	Kenan Habibic
Charl Franks	Lucas Salerno
Daniel Hazelrigg	Meg Saxman
Daniel McCarty	Megan Coffin
Devon Merder	Michelle Bojrab-Wray
Dylan Hodges	Michelle Marqueling
Emily Schneider	Patricia Wasserman
Haley Hoover	Pete Lessing
Heather Closson	Robert Confer
Jacob Sweet	Ryan Lewis
James Holm	Sierra Grayson
Jamie Hines	Stephanie Waikel
Jeremy Widenhoefer	Tyler Gerig
Jessica Field	

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## NextGen Leadership Institute

YLNI debuted the NextGen Leadership Institute in 2020 to bridge the gap in our leadership development programming. The program strives to connect students from local universities and young entrepreneurs together for a two-day program.

The inaugural class consisted of 15 individuals from 7 local colleges and universities. The two-day program covered budgeting, resume critiquing, DISC, GRIT, networking, and communication. The participants celebrated their accomplishments and completion of the program with a graduation celebration at Parkview Field at the end of the second day.



## Class of 2020

**Jacob Allred**

**Sarah Bradford**

**Arendy Ceja**

**Leo Corso**

**Carley DeLong**

**Austin Fisher**

**Sydney Heinbaugh**

**Mary Landrigan**

**Christina Le**

**Jordan Page**

**Ivan Safranic**

**Pau Sang**

**Irwin Villeda**

**Eaint Honey Aung Win**

**Bethany Young**

## High School Leadership Institute

YLNI's High School Leadership Institute connects emerging professionals with community leaders to learn about various topics, including temperaments and interaction styles, interpersonal communications, networking and community engagement, and financial strength. High School Leadership Institute sessions also include tours of major downtown landmarks to better understand all that our city has to offer.

***Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 YLNI High School Leadership was postponed to June 2021.***

### NextGen Committee Members

Morgan Ferguson (chair), Jennifer Simmons (chair), Julie Cogley-Pifko, Lindsey Dutrieux, Trent Hullinger, Cassie Kurtz, Giang Petroviak, Carrie Reeb

### High School Committee Members

Jessica Morales (chair), Misha Billingsley, Jesus Gonzalez, Sam Graves, Morgan Johnson, Ashley Remy, Shiv Sonani, Stephanie Taylor



# SOCIAL

## YLNI Hot Spots

YLNI Hot Spots are free monthly networking events that allow individuals to learn more about YLNI and connect with like-minded young professionals in the region while exploring and supporting a local business. We invite all young leaders to come to Hot Spots, including new, current, and interested

members, on the third Thursday of every month from 5:30-7:00 pm. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing guidelines, we adapted by hosting two virtual Hot Spot events, which allowed individuals to meet others and create connections from the comfort of their own homes.

## 2020 Hot Spots

**January - Old Crown**

**February - JK O'Donnell's**

**March - N/A**

**April - Virtual via Zoom**

**May - Virtual via Zoom**

**June - Kekionga Cider Company**

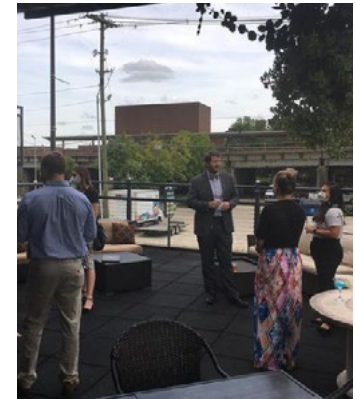
**July - Pavillion at Promenade Park**

**August - Club Soda**

**September - The Landing Beer Co.**

**October - Ambrosia Orchard**

**November - Hop River**



**“It’s a tried and true format. We’re not asking for an extensive time commitment or money. Show up, grab a drink, stay as long or as short as you’d like, and get to know other young leaders in the northeast Indiana area.”**

**Rachel Batdorff**  
co-chair, Hot Spots

# A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Wow, what a year! 2020 turned out to be a year we could have never imagined and will not soon forget. The country was hit with challenges, obstacles, loss, grief, and numerous opportunities and blessings. My belief is, no matter what happens in life, opportunities can be found in every obstacle.

Last year, my note discussed how I thought YLNI had an incredible year and how I thought we could be even better. I touched on how being better requires us to step into the arena of discomfort and the unknown; how courage is essential for growth. I had no idea at the time just how uncomfortable things were about to become.

Like many organizations in 2020, we found ourselves faced with a decision to cancel all events and programming or pivot, and we decided to pivot. We transitioned nearly all our programming to online platforms while maintaining others in-person through appropriate social distance; that was the easy part.

Then, in May 2020, our lives and our organization changed forever. We came face-to-face with the hard reality of social and racial injustice, not only in our community but in our country. We mourned, we stood in solidarity, and we took action the best way we knew how. We started having conversations

with as many people as we could about what was happening, how they felt, the history of racism in our country, what we could do as an organization, and how we could make a meaningful impact. It's been uncomfortable, it's been imperfect, and it's been progress on what we know will be a long journey.

Leaders are called to see the opportunities in obstacles, and good leaders lead by influence, not control, and great leaders are intentional about empowering the right people. YLNI embodies this and is full of incredible, courageous leaders. 2020 was no exception. We stretched our community engagement efforts by enhancing our Community Engagement and Advocacy Committee to include diversity and inclusion, and it is now our Inclusion, Diversity, and Advocacy (IDA) committee. We pushed ourselves and our community by hosting a Tough Talks series about diversity and inclusion, specifically about moving our community to a place of true equality. IDA is just getting started, and we hope you join us on the journey to make our community inclusive.

We stretched our leadership development programming and added IGNITE to focus on young entrepreneurs in the region. Our programming now consists of the High School Leadership Institute,

NextGen for college students, our traditional Leadership Institute program for young professionals, and IGNITE for those with a desire to own a business.

We were able to lease a space for our first-ever Winter Market through a partnership with Sweetwater, and the community has graciously responded more favorably than we thought possible. These are just a few examples of how we've set out to be better regardless of obstacles and opposition. I believe who we are is how we lead. YLNI is an organization made up of bold, courageous young leaders making an impact in this community. As we look forward, we will continue to be valiant, striving further to expand this organization's reach in our community, and we hope to do it with you by our side.

With that, I'd like to thank our sponsors and grantees for supporting us and our mission; the community leaders who believe in and support our organization; our Board of Directors, committee chairs, members, and volunteers for helping to make our mission a reality.



**Savannah Robinson**

President | Young Leaders of Northeast Indiana





YLNI.org



@YLNI.org



@youngleadersnei



@YLNI



Young Leaders of  
Northeast Indiana