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From Foster Care to National Recognition: Miami Youth Advocate Honored for Elevating Youth Voice and Building Lifelong Connections

MIAMI, FL — When Knowledge Grant entered foster care at 14, her world began shifting beneath her feet. One placement became another. One school turned into the next. Every time she unpacked, she knew she might soon have to pack again. For many adolescents, these disruptions would be destabilizing; for teens in foster care, research shows they can erode connections, interrupt learning, and make it harder to build trust. Yet Knowledge kept searching for solid ground, people who would stay, adults who would care, and a place she could belong.

Years later, Knowledge is being honored nationwide for turning those experiences into fierce, compassionate advocacy. Rather than allowing instability to define her story, she has used her voice to illuminate what young people need most: not systems that supervise them until adulthood, but relationships and communities that commit to them for life.

The Youth Law Center's Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) has named Knowledge Grant a 2025 Elevate & Celebrate Honoree, recognizing her leadership in elevating youth voice and strengthening the transition to adulthood for young people in foster care. She is one of just six honorees selected nationally.

Knowledge's story echoes themes highlighted in the newly published [Adolescent Development Consensus Statement](#), authored by leading developmental scientists in partnership with the Youth Law Center. The statement emphasizes that adolescence is a period of extraordinary growth and opportunity, during which teens rely on stable relationships, emotional connection, and meaningful autonomy to thrive. It also warns that foster care often disrupts these essential supports at precisely the moment adolescents need them most.

In fact, Knowledge was one of the lived-experience leaders whose insights helped shape the Consensus Statement itself. Her experiences navigating instability, abrupt transitions, and inconsistent adult support provided essential grounding for researchers seeking to understand what adolescents in foster care need to thrive. Her voice helped ensure that the final statement did not simply reflect academic expertise, but the real-world truths of young people who have lived inside the system.

Knowledge has lived the research. After aging out of care, she experienced homelessness while trying to continue her education, a reflection of what the Consensus Statement identifies as the “perfect storm” facing teens in foster care: instability, abrupt transitions, and a shortage of committed adults to guide them into adulthood. Rather than let this period break her, she transformed it into purpose.

“Using my voice helps people understand what foster care really feels like,” she said. “If my story can make things better for even one young person, it’s worth sharing.”

QPI’s national movement is grounded in a belief shared by the Consensus Statement: excellent parenting, emotional commitment, and strong relationships are not exceptional acts, they are the foundation of healthy adolescence, and systems have the responsibility to make them possible for every young person.

Research affirms this approach. A 2022 evaluation found that QPI improves communication and strengthens relationships between birth parents, foster parents, and agency staff, relationships that help stabilize youth and support healthy development. And a 2024 peer-reviewed analysis concluded that QPI’s stakeholder-driven, family-centered strategies “shift power toward caregivers to improve outcomes for children,” with significant implications for reform.

Knowledge brings research insights to life through her leadership with the Citrus Family Care Network Youth Advisory Board, where she draws on her lived experience to push for systems that see young people not as temporary responsibilities but as developing humans who need love, guidance, and connection. She works to ensure that youth exiting care do not step into adulthood alone, but with the stability research shows is critical for success.

Citrus Family Care Network is now taking the Consensus Statement’s findings and turning them into practice, working to redesign the experience of adolescents entering foster care so that young people are met with stability, voice, and strong relational support from the very beginning. Knowledge plays a key role in this effort through her position on the Youth Advisory Board, helping Citrus translate developmental science—and the lived realities behind it—into concrete improvements for teens in Miami-Dade. Her leadership reflects the powerful cycle of change the Consensus Statement envisioned: young people shaping the research, and then using that same research to transform systems.

Citrus’s commitment to grounding its practice in developmental science and youth voice makes it a national example of how agencies can partner with young people to improve foster care.

Knowledge also contributes as a national leader in QPI's Champions Program, which brings together foster parents, birth parents, youth with lived experience, and community partners to strengthen relationships and improve daily practice. With nearly 1,000 Champions nationwide, the program reflects a movement toward a system built on developmental science, youth voice, and shared caregiving.

Knowledge's advocacy is reshaping the conditions she once had to navigate alone. She is helping build a future in which every teen in foster care has the relationships, stability, and opportunities that developmental research—and her own lived experience—make clear are essential. Knowledge's work with Citrus and QPI shows what becomes possible when research, lived experience, and agency leadership come together: not just better policy, but better lives for young people.

Her selection as a 2025 Elevate & Celebrate Honoree recognizes not only her courage and leadership, but a broader truth: when young people are listened to, supported, and surrounded by committed adults, they don't just survive foster care, they shape its future.

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The Youth Law Center (YLC) is a non-profit law firm that advocates to transform foster care and juvenile justice systems across the nation so that every child and youth can thrive. The Youth Law Center leads the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI), a national movement spanning more than 75 sites and nearly 1,000 QPI Champions committed to ensuring that every child in foster care receives excellent parenting and remains connected to the people who love them.. www.YLC.org.

