



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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New program coordinators announced at Iron Range Youth in Action

As a high school student in Virginia, Taryn Burnett remembers hearing about a new youth program that had just started at her school. Fast forward more than a decade and that fledgling organization – Iron Range Youth in Action (IRYA) – has now spread to involve more than 400 students in grades 9 through 12, from 11 schools across the Iron Range. And Burnett is one of two people recently hired by St. Louis County to serve as a Youth Program Coordinator, working with students and encouraging them to develop leadership skills.

Joining Burnett as the other Youth Program Coordinator is Tyler Erickson. A native of Alexandria, Minn., Erickson moved to the Northland to attend college, and chose to make this region his home.

Burnett holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and sociology from the University of Wisconsin Superior. She most recently worked as a residential case manager at KidsPeace Mesabi Academy. Erickson earned his bachelor's degree in criminology and psychology from the University of Minnesota Duluth. Before joining IRYA, he worked at Woodland Hills as a senior youth care coordinator.

Both Burnett and Erickson say they are most excited about working with young people facilitating positive events. They meet with students on a weekly or bi-weekly basis during school visits over the lunch hour.

“I really like the community involvement I see with IRYA,” said Burnett. “These young people are getting involved in meaningful ways and serving their communities.”

For instance, just this month, IRYA participants will help serve and clean up at a Habitat for Humanity fundraiser in Mountain Iron; they'll assist with registration, parking, concessions and

more during the Bobber Stop Fishing Tournament in Eveleth; and they'll provide DJ services at school dances and the YMCA Father Daughter dance. That's in addition to the Young Leaders' Conference, which is expected to draw more than 450 youth from across the Iron Range.

"We are here to offer guidance to the students, because this really is their program," said Erickson. "We're a resource for these young people and are happy to brainstorm ideas with them, but it's the students who lead IRYA."

"This organization grew dramatically under the guidance of former director Chris Ismil," said St. Louis County Commissioner Keith Nelson, who also chairs the IRYA Board. "We expect with this new leadership to see growth that is even more bold and community impact will be even more positive.

Burnett and Erickson aren't the only new faces at IRYA. Shelly Jamnick also recently joined the staff in an office support role. She brings more than 20 years of administrative experience to her position.

Iron Range Youth in Action is a youth-run organization first started in 1996. It was the vision of the northern St. Louis County commissioners to empower youth to make decisions and take action to create positive change in their lives and communities. To learn more about Iron Range Youth in Action, visit irya.org or call (218) 749-7114. Any young people interested in joining IRYA should talk with their school advisor for details.

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Taryn Burnett



Tyler Erickson



Shelly Jamnick