



## NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# A Voice for Michigan's Youth: Riley Brown Earns Top JMG Alumni Honor

NORTHWEST LOWER, MI- Out of more than 33,000 alumni across the state, **Riley Brown**, a participant in Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG), a program of **Networks Northwest**, has been named the **2026 JMG Alumni of the Year** by Youth Solutions—an honor reserved for a student whose journey reflects resilience, leadership, and the transformative power of opportunity. Riley will be formally recognized at the Career Development Conference (CDC) on Thursday, April 30th in Saginaw.

Riley's story is one of growth, courage, and discovery. She joined JMG in 2022 as a junior at Glen Lake High School while also attending Northwest Education Career Tech. At the time, she was a quiet student—full of potential, but still searching for her voice and direction. Through JMG, Riley found more than a program—she found a community that believed in her. Surrounded by mentors and opportunities, she began stepping beyond her comfort zone, participating in leadership events such as Leadership Day, Legislative Day, Career Development Day, National Career Development Day, and National Student Leadership Day in Washington, D.C. Each experience helped her build confidence, strengthen her communication skills, and discover the power of her voice.

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Networks Northwest and Northwest Michigan Works! are supported by the State of Michigan and are proud partners of the American Job Center Network. Projects may be funded with the authorized and appropriate use of federal funds. Contact Networks Northwest for additional information. Equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and service are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Individuals with speech or hearing impairments may call the Michigan Relay Center by dialing 711.



That voice soon became one others would follow.

Riley rose through the ranks of the Youth Advisory Council, first serving as Vice President and now as President, representing students across Michigan with professionalism and purpose. She has worked alongside policymakers at the state and national levels—including Jack Bergman and other state leaders—to elevate the importance of JMG and advocate for investment in youth.

Her leadership has been defined not just by titles, but by action. Whether delivering an impromptu speech when a scheduled speaker was unable to attend or earning first place in the Prepared Speaking competition at the National Career Development Conference in Indianapolis—where she was also named one of the Top 16 candidates in the nation—Riley has consistently demonstrated courage, poise, and authenticity. She made history as the first participant from Michigan to achieve this national distinction.

Beyond her leadership roles, Riley has balanced an extraordinary workload—pursuing dual enrollment at Northwestern Michigan College, completing Automotive Repair training, maintaining steady employment, and giving back through volunteer service.

Today, her journey continues to evolve. After exploring both healthcare and higher education pathways, she discovered a passion for education and is now a student teacher for elementary students in the Grand Rapids area—an experience that reflects her growing commitment to guiding and inspiring others, as she shares in her own words:

"The Jobs for Michigan's Graduate program has helped in every aspect of my life, especially professional, as well as opening up numerous doors for me! Without JMG, their guidance and opportunities, I would not be as successful as I am today."



"I'm so proud of Riley; she continues to inspire me. Despite juggling school, volunteering, work, and medical appointments, she remains resilient, committed, and focused on her future. It's been a joy to watch her grow into the remarkable young woman she is today," states JMG Specialist, Lisa Baldyga.

Riley Brown's recognition as Alumni of the Year is not just a personal achievement—it is a reflection of the life-changing impact of the Jobs for Michigan's Graduates program. Her story stands as an inspiring example of how guidance, opportunity, and belief can empower young people to realize their full potential and create meaningful paths forward.

Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG), administered by Youth Solutions, is a statewide program dedicated to helping young people overcome barriers, graduate from high school, and successfully transition into postsecondary education and meaningful careers. To learn more about JMG visit, [nwm.org/jmg](http://nwm.org/jmg)

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by emailing Dana O'Dell at [dana.odell@networksnorthwest.org](mailto:dana.odell@networksnorthwest.org) and stating preferences for resolution, file format, and file size. Or phone (231) 929-5075. Check our online Media Room at [networksnorthwest.org/media](http://networksnorthwest.org/media)

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10-county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works!, APEX Accelerator (formerly PTAC), various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business, and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our website, [networksnorthwest.org](http://networksnorthwest.org). Networks Northwest's member counties are Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.

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