



## 2021 National Vicepresident Candidate



### Vanessa Birchler, Illinois

I joined the New Baden Jaycees in January, 2007, as a 19 year old girl trying to find her place in the world. I was working, going to school, and figuring out what I wanted my life to look like. During that time I found the Jaycees. Initially I thought that this would get me out of the house and meet new people. Little did I know then that the choice to join the Jaycees would define my life.

Early in my Jaycee career I chaired projects and held board positions, including Local President. Our little chapter was struggling and a group of us decided we had to change the direction or close up shop. Over the course of 3 years our chapter went from four active age members to a chapter with more than 75 members who were engaged and setting our chapter on a new path. Through the use of the basic Jaycee principles like balanced programing, ROAR (recruit, orientate, active and retain), and ideals learned in JCI Courses, and using PMGs and Civic Leadership Certification to guide our actions we went from hanging on by a thread to being twice named the best chapter in the State of Illinois.

In 2014 I began my journey at higher leadership levels when I began serving the Illinois Jaycees as a Program Manager for PMG's and District Director. From there I went on to serve in all three Vice President roles, Programming, Administrative and Membership, for the Illinois Jaycees. In 2018 I proudly served as the 87<sup>th</sup> President of the Illinois Jaycees. During my time as an executive committee member of the Illinois Jaycees I stepped out of my comfort zone, visited chapters and maintained consistent contact with chapters to better understand their needs and develop plans of how challenges can be overcome. I spent countless hours on the road, making phone calls and on the ground mentoring chapters all across the state. Every member and every chapter is important to me and I wanted them to know that.

In 2019 I served JCI USA as co- program manager for TOYA and as Conference Organizing Director. Through these roles I again learned how the organization impacts and affects members. I believe the National Team should provide resources, motivation, and the tools to help our members be successful. You, the members, are what make JCI USA. Our chapters and members are diverse and through my experiences and various leadership roles I have learned how chapter programming, recruitment and impact varies in chapters with 10 members to 100 and in communities of 500 to 50,000 people.

During these challenging times it can seem that what you are doing is small and irrelevant. We all have times that we struggle with what our role is but no matter what you are doing it is serving a purpose to someone and that makes it important. The small ripple you are making may turn into a tidal wave of personal development, community impact or the thing that changes the direction of your life. Together with the other members of the JCI USA Executive Committee and each of you individually I want to see us all start a ripple and create a tidal wave in 2021!