

Advocating for herself — and for other students — helped young Utahn overcome 'crippling' anxiety

This is part of a series of interviews with young Utahns making a meaningful impact on their communities — and their own — mental health. To protect their privacy, participants under 18 are identified only by their first names. Read sltrib.com.

When Laynie was in elementary school, she developed "crippling" anxiety that made completing her school work nearly impossible. With help from her parents, doctors and teachers, Laynie was put on a 504 plan that lists accommodations available to a student with a disability.

When she entered junior high, though, Laynie says the plan fell to the wayside.

"It wasn't really being used anymore, because I wasn't asking teachers for help," Laynie told me in a recent interview. "I needed to be my own advocate. And it wasn't until I did that that my 504 started being used again."

Now she's helping other students advocate for their needs through a service initiative called S.P.E.A.K. UP and as an ambassador for The Hope Hero Foundation.

Laynie spoke with The Tribune about the challenges she's faced, the impact of her work and her advice for other young Utahns.

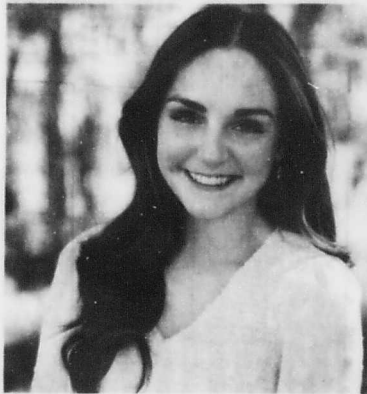
This Q&A with her has been edited for length and clarity.

Sara Weber: You've shared your own challenges with mental health. I'm curious what kind of mental health needs you've seen in your community?

Laynie: Mental health impacts everybody. For me, it's learning anxiety. I feel that, especially in teens, it's the social pressure that we have to live up to, because you see on social media that everyone's perfect, everyone's up to the standard. And right now, in high school, it's honestly embarrassing to raise your hand in the classroom. That should not be embarrassing. You should not have anxiety about that. With my S.P.E.A.K. UP organization and with The Hope Hero Foundation, I want to encourage teens that it's okay to raise your hand in a classroom and not feel embarrassed about it and to break out of that social stigma.

What kind of challenges do you face trying to accomplish that?

I know that there are tons of people who really don't want to hear stuff from a teenager, but I am seeing firsthand at school that there are kids who are not getting the help that they need because they are scared to speak up for themselves. My biggest struggle is getting in front of people and getting people to actually listen because this is a problem.



"I want to encourage teens that it's OK to raise your hand in a classroom and not feel embarrassed about it and to break out of that social stigma," says Laynie, a young Utahn who helps other students advocate for their needs through a service initiative called S.P.E.A.K. UP and as an ambassador for The Hope Hero Foundation.

Can you tell me about some of the impact you've seen firsthand?

My brother has dyslexia and dysgraphia. If you don't know

what dysgraphia is, it's where he can't get what he thinks in his brain onto his paper. And that's really hard for him because he has to speak things instead of

writing them down on paper. S.P.E.A.K. UP skills have helped him, and I have seen it in other kids in his class, as well.

And how has working with both of these foundations and projects impacted your own mental health?

The Hope Hero Foundation has helped me a lot. After losing a friend to suicide, it's really tough. Seeing that other people were going through the same thing that I was, it's like knowing there's a support system behind me.

And S.P.E.A.K. UP really helps me because I could help people believe they are not alone. When it comes to being scared in a classroom, I was that kid in the classroom has struggled. And I've seen other kids struggle as well. And so I can go up to them and show them my story, and tell them that it's okay to speak up and be successful and get that help that you need in the classroom and not feel embarrassed about it.

What advice do you have for other young adults who are looking to help improve their peers' mental health?

Just be yourself and be you and don't be afraid to reach out. I want to encourage other students to be the hero of their own story. That's what The Hope Hero Foundation stands for.

Parker

by Sara Weber

A restoration could incorporate some of the distinctive design elements that define it as an 1800s engine, such as the diamond stack, box headlight, trim on the domes and wooden pilot.

Naturally, due to safety reasons and practicality, not everything on the engine could or

should be backdated to the 1800s — there is no need to take an all-or-nothing approach to the engine's restoration.

But to restore it entirely to its appearance at the end of its service life during the 20th century — with a straight stack, round headlight, plain domes and steel pilot — would also be a mistake. There is no need to go to that extreme, either.

The engine can be restored to

operation and incorporate the key, defining engineering elements that distinguish it as an 1800s engine. That would appropriately honor its rarity and antiquity.

The hardworking volunteers of the Golden Spike Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society have already made a great deal of progress on this project.

For example, they have

completely rebuilt the cab of the engine and its tender — also known as the coal car.

While their efforts were shut down a few years ago due to a question regarding the engine's ownership, that question has now been resolved. It was determined that Ogden owns the engine and, now, Ogden just needs to decide how to proceed on its restoration.

Built in 1881, Locomotive 223

is a rare gem that represents one of the most historically significant time periods in Utah's history.

It's time to get this engine back on track.

Dana Parker is a member of the Golden Spike Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of the organization.

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