

*Excerpts of 8<sup>th</sup> grade member Alyssa's speech to 215 guests at the Club's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebrity Breakfast.*

*November 14, 2016:*

Hi! My name is Alyssa, and I am in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.... When I first joined Wakeman, I thought I would never talk to anyone. I liked the place, but hadn't connected to any program or any person just yet. But last year I heard about a Wakeman program called Sparks and really wanted to try it out. It is a travel and leadership program for middle schoolers. Every week our group met and during those classes I barely spoke to anyone. It was hard being the new girl but I knew at some point I would have something to say.

Slowly I started to find out facts about my group and I got more comfortable with them. When it was time to travel to Washington DC last summer, I was nervous yet again. I didn't know how I would survive, but the funny thing is, that week away with Wakeman made me a more outgoing person. I didn't STOP talking on that trip. I learned a lot about the places we visited, but I also learned about myself. I learned that I liked being a leader and that I didn't mind speaking in front of a WHOLE BUNCH of people. On the trip I even made new friends I never thought I would have. Every single second of that trip was an experience I will never forget.

Now this school year I have gotten involved in many more Wakeman programs like Torch Club, LiveGirl and basketball. I can't wait for what's next.

To all of you here today, thank you. Wakeman helped me become a more open minded person. Literally, Wakeman gave me MY voice. And again, I thank you for that.