I'm nominating 24 year old Morgan Chavez; a mental health blogger, Field Advocate for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, published writer, Motivational Speaker, and survivor of suicide.

At age two, Morgan lost her Mother (a Corporal in the United States Army and Davenport University student) to suicide. After this tragic loss, Morgan was forced to live with her Father where she endured sexual, mental, and physical abuse for 3 long years. Thankfully, after a drawn out custody battle, she was happily adopted by her maternal Grandparents.

Diagnosed at age 7 with childhood depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and a speech impediment Morgan knew she was different but she embraced her individuality. In 2010, she was accepted to Michigan State University as a first generation college student where she studied Environmental Studies & Agriscience focusing on Policy. While attending Michigan State, she served as the Events Coordinator for the Student Health Advisory Council focusing her attention on lifting the stigma associated with mental health. From there, she discovered a newfound love for politics and began lobbying as a Field Advocate for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. She fought and continues to fight relentlessly writing letters, calling legislators, and making necessary visits with the hope and mission of lifting the stigma that's associated with mental illness.

In 2011, Morgan was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder 2. Embarrassed by this new diagnosis, she kept it a secret fearing that her friends, family, and future employers wouldn't accept her-a common fear in those living with mental illness.

Suffering in silence, Morgan had her first and only suicide attempt in 2014. During this dark time, she recalls the outpouring of love and support from her friends, family, psychiatrists at Olin Student Health Center, the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at Michigan State University, and faculty through The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

She would later publicly announce her diagnosis in 2015 through a project put on during Michigan State University's Mental Health Week.

That same year, Morgan was selected to represent the state of Michigan in 2015 for the USA National Miss pageant system. Morgan used her title of Miss Michigan to amplify her voice in the mental health community and educate the public on issues like mental health parity and the daily struggles those living with mental illness face.

In 2016, after a severe depression, Morgan had her first hospitalization. While this hospitalization brought about new changes, Morgan used it as a catalyst for change in her life. She began blogging in hopes of reaching a larger audience and generating awareness for mental health in the United States and world. A month after her hospitalization, she was invited by Michigan HOSA to speak to hundreds of high school students at Macomb Community College on the topics of mental health and suicide prevention. Her talk was well received and since then she's been invited to speak to audiences throughout the state of Michigan.

You can find her published pieces on [www.liftthestigma.wordpress.com](http://www.liftthestigma.wordpress.com), in the Lansing State Journal, on the NAMI blog, and on [thoughtcatalog.com](http://thoughtcatalog.com). She regularly posts articles directing the public to mental healthcare resources, current insurance coverage, prescription formularies, recent healthcare legislation, and writes about the reality of living with mental illness.

Morgan has persevered in the face of adversity and criticism and is a true inspiration to those around her. She can be quoted saying "You feel that heartbeat? That's a reminder that you're alive. You have purpose and your life is worth living." I couldn't think of a more deserving individual for both the Clifford W. Beers Award and the Media Awards.

Thank You,

Jacqueline M. Cook

450 Willoughby Rd.

Mason, MI 48854

cookjac5@msu.edu

517-896-8078



