

AUSTIN AREA TEEN NAMED 'SOUTHWEST YOUTH OF THE YEAR' BY BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA

Melanie Webster from Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area to receive \$40K college scholarship and vie for national title this fall

Dallas, June 21, 2016 – Selected among eight outstanding finalists from Boys & Girls Clubs across the region, Melanie Webster has been named the Southwest Youth of the Year by Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA). She will receive a \$10,000 college scholarship from BGCA renewable for up to four years, leading to a total of \$40,000. Webster's drive and unrelenting determination have helped her overcome many challenges in pursuit of her dream to become a doctor.

"Before high school, I didn't have any drive, any real goals, or any real sense of self-worth beyond my school work," Webster, the 18-year-old Lanier High School senior said. "The Club taught me that I could do anything that I put my mind to with real work; they showed me and taught me the skills I need to reach the goals I have in mind."

Webster was recently accepted into the Biochemistry program at the University of Texas and received three scholarships prior to becoming the Southwest Youth of the Year. She plans to become a doctor and hopes to open a practice that's affordable for low-income households.

In addition to her academic achievements, Webster serves as captain of the Vikettes Drill Team, secretary of service at her Boys & Girls Club's Keystone Club, and she volunteers regularly in the Austin community.

"I have had the privilege of mentoring Melanie since her freshman year of high school," said Lani Lappinga, family engagement specialist at Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area. "She is an engaged, reliable and determined young woman who has been a role model to many of her peers and fellow Club members."

With a nearly 70 year history, BGCA's premier youth leadership program Youth of the Year recognizes outstanding contributions to a member's family, school, community and Boys & Girls Club. The leadership program encourages Club members to reach their full potential by achieving academic success, leading healthy lifestyles and contributing to their communities. These extraordinary young leaders are shining examples and living proof that great futures start at Boys & Girls Clubs.

This fall, Webster will travel to Washington D.C. to vie for the National Youth of the Year title, which comes with an additional \$100,000 scholarship, a potential visit with the President of the United States and the opportunity to serve as a spokesperson for Boys & Girls Clubs of America representing four million Club kids and teens.

"As National Youth of the Year, I would hope to spark a legacy of hope and giving in the hearts of teens everywhere," Webster said. "To inspire them and show that no matter who you are, or where you come from, you can do anything you want in life."

The Youth of the Year recognition program is presented by The Walt Disney Company, who has supported BGCA for more than 50 years, empowering young people to reach their full potential and providing youth with access to the tools they need to build the great futures they imagine. Toyota, Signature Sponsor of Youth of the Year, is dedicated to inspiring the next generations of engineers, thinkers and leaders who will help drive the American economy. Additional support is provided by University of Phoenix, a committed partner who has worked with BGCA on many Academic Success initiatives, and the Taco Bell Foundation, BGCA's premier partner for teen empowerment.

For more information about the Youth of the Year program, visit youthoftheyear.org.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of America

For more than 150 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (<http://www.GreatFutures.org>) has enabled young people most in need to achieve great futures as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Today, more than 4,100 Clubs serve nearly 4 million young people annually through Club membership and community outreach. Clubs are located in cities, towns, public housing and on Native lands throughout the country, and serve military families in BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide. They provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun, friendship, and high-impact youth development programs on a daily basis during critical non-school hours. Priority programs emphasize academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles. In a Harris Survey of alumni, 54 percent said the Club saved their lives. National headquarters are located in Atlanta. Learn more at <http://www.bgca.org/facebook> and <http://bgca.org/twitter>.

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