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Contact: Michele Glaze, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area
512.922.9381
Michele.Glaze@bgcaustin.org

AUSTIN TEEN NAMED NORTH TEXAS BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS 2017 “YOUTH OF THE YEAR”

AUSTIN, TX, February, 2017 – Wendy Rodriguez, senior at Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders and representative of Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area (BGCAA) was named **2017 North Texas Youth of the Year**. “Youth of the Year” is the highest honor a Boys & Girls Clubs member can receive. After being named **Austin’s 2017 “Youth of the Year”** by BGCAA, Wendy advanced to the North Texas region where she competed with young people from other Boys & Girls Clubs chapters in North Texas. The “Youth of the Year” title is awarded to an exemplary young person in recognition of leadership, service, academic excellence, and commitment to a healthy lifestyle.

Wendy’s dream is to become Mayor of Austin. She says, “I never give up on anything that I start.” Wendy has also won trustee’s awards, Latino Achievement awards, was a student body president at Ann Richards, and volunteers regularly at J.J. Pickle Elementary School and her church.

The BGCAA “Youth of the Year” program provides a total of \$30,000 in scholarship money split between the program winners and finalists. Wendy walked away with \$10,000 in scholarships in Austin. She has the chance at an additional \$100,000 in scholarships and the opportunity to meet the President of the United States if she is named Boys & Girls Clubs of America’s “National Youth of the Year.” Wendy will compete for the title of Texas “Youth of the Year” on Feb. 28 at the Boys & Girls Clubs Texas Alliance State Summit.

Alongside Wendy is this year’s BGCAA “Junior Youth of the Year” winner, Christian Brown, an 8th grader from Garcia Young Men's Leadership Academy. Christian competed among the middle school aged Club youth and represents the next generation of future Club teens. He is House Leader of his

school, a tutor, on Junior Staff at BGCAA, and hopefully soon to be President of Student Council. Christian says, he leads “of the people, by the people, to the people, and with the people.” It’s this cycle of success that represents the powerful youth development foundation of the BGCAA.

The “Youth of the Year” leadership experience is a national Boys & Girls Clubs of America initiative that takes place in more than 4,000 Clubs around the country that serve four million youth. The Austin area “Youth of the Year” program is sponsored by Hilton Hotels and focuses on helping young people develop basic leadership knowledge and skills to prepare them for success in personal and professional settings. They gain a sense of their values, vision, purpose and passion, plus, they learn to make everyday choices that lead to positive results. Through these programs, Club youth can showcase their talents and achievements, share their hopes and dreams while building a positive and productive future.

***Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area (BGCAA)**, is Austin’s leading youth development agency currently serving more than 12,000 kids via 28 Clubs. 2017 marks BGCAA’s 50th year in the Austin area a benchmark measured by thousands of local youth success stories. Club youth participate in high-impact development programs that, compared to non-club youth, result in better school attendance, better grades, higher graduation rates and a higher likelihood to attend college. Through support from local individuals, businesses and BGCAA Staff, Club youth are given the tools and opportunities to create great futures.*

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