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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Youth Attend SAYSO State Conference

Spindale - Eleven Rutherford County youth participated in the North Carolina SAYSO (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out) Conference on March 4, 2017 at Guilford Technical Community College in Greensboro. This annual event is held each year on the first Saturday in March. The day is full of various workshops, opportunities to meet new people, and a time to share ideas.

During the conference, Matthew Bridges and Shanyia Davis, both Rutherford County members, were elected to fill two of the three slots on the state board of directors representing the 27-county western region. To be elected, Matthew and Shanyia had to prepare and present speeches and be voted on by other regional members. *"This says much about their character and leadership, and we are very proud of them and all of the members of our local SAYSO chapter. We have only been established for three months, and with the hard work of all the members, we have gotten off to a great start"*, said Dena Guffey, a Social Worker with the Department of Social Services and one of the group's advisors.

A 501C3 organization, SAYSO is a statewide association of youth aged 14 to 24 who are or have been in the out-of-home care system in North Carolina, including foster care, group homes, and mental health placements. The group was founded in 1998 by a stakeholder group of older youth in care, adult caregivers, and adult professionals, as a way for youth to be more involved in advocating and policy development for young people in substitute care. SAYSO has been recognized with respect in North Carolina and nationally as a youth-driven advocacy organization. It has a mission to work to improve the substitute care system by educating the community, speaking out about needed change, and providing support to youth that are and have been in substitute care.

For more information about Rutherford County's local SAYSO chapter, contact Dena Guffey at 828-287-6165 or Dena.Guffey@rutherfordcountync.gov, or visit the organization's web site <http://www.saysoinc.org/>.

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