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MARYAH SULLIVAN NAMED 2014 YOUTH OF THE YEAR

*Extraordinary Teen Wins Local & State Title, Receives College Scholarship
Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida's Seven Youth Finalists Realizing Goals*

ORLANDO, FL. - (June 2, 2014) – Maryah Sullivan, an incredible teen at Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida, has been selected as the 2014 State of Florida Youth of the Year. She stood out in a crowd of teens from more than 30 organizations at the state competition held in Orlando. She will soon compete in the Southeast Regional Youth of the Year competition in Atlanta, Ga. A Club member from Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida has won the Youth of the Year competition at the state level for six out of the past eight years.

For 12 years, Sullivan has been an active member of Joe R. Lee Branch in Eatonville. “I began my journey with the Club when I was six years old when the Club operated out of a small trailer,” said Sullivan. “But honestly, I never really cared that we were in a trailer. What mattered to me was that there were always fun, positive activities going on. If you were hungry, there was something to eat and if you needed help with school, there was always someone there to extend a hand. No matter what, if you were having a hard time, there was always someone there to listen at the Boys & Girls Club.”

Sullivan was selected for the prestigious award because of her educational achievements, various leadership roles, dedication to the community, post-graduation goals and her compelling story of overcoming adversity. From a single-parent, low-income household, Sullivan overcame adversities and obstacles that included rough neighborhoods, family adversity, illness and death and becoming a surrogate mother to her younger siblings all while maintaining a 4.4 GPA. “Although I have been through a lot, I will not allow any of my circumstances to stop me,” said Sullivan. “My Club reinforces that ideal every day I am here. It is my constant reminder of hope and that I can be anything I want to be.”

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Austin Long, Service Director of the Joe R. Lee Branch, has watched Sullivan grow up at the Club. "I have had the pleasure of seeing Maryah grow and develop into an outstanding young adult," he said. "She has always shown an intense desire to better herself, the Club and her community. Her achievements in the areas of academics, leadership and community service reflect her motivation and desire to succeed."

Throughout her membership in the Club, Sullivan has been involved in various youth development programs and activities. She is president of the Keystone Club, leading a group of teens who focus on academics, career preparation and community

service. Sullivan has also been a member of Smart Girls, a program geared toward developing healthy attitudes and lifestyles. She has been instrumental in coordinating college tours for her fellow Club members and helping volunteers get involved at the Joe R. Lee Branch. She also volunteered herself for the Club's annual Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

As the State of Florida Youth of the Year winner, Sullivan was awarded a \$5,000 scholarship from WellCare Health Plans, Inc. and \$1,000 from Tupperware Brands Corporation. This summer, she plans to start her college career at the University of South Florida where she has received grants-in-aid from the university totaling \$14,000 per year. She plans to major in pre-medicine with the goal of becoming a neurosurgeon who will develop a more effective treatment for brain cancer and eventually a cure.

Other Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida Youth of the Year finalists included: Ashley Williams, recipient of the Goings Scholarship through the Ricks and Susan Goings Foundation and future student of Rollins College; Shantell Mitchell, recipient of the Goings Scholarship and future student of Rollins College; Michael McCauley, recipient of the Redick Family Scholarship and future student of LaGrange College; Jacobie Smith, future student of Drexel University; Jessica Santana, future student of Valencia College; and Jamecia Mendez, who will be a senior at Cypress Creek High School in the fall.



Sullivan wins prestigious 2014 State Youth of the Year award.

Sullivan was the keynote speaker at the organization's top-rated fundraiser, [Celebrate The Children](#), held May 16 at the Orlando World Center Marriott. To learn more about the event or to make a donation visit www.bgccf.org.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida:

Founded in 1944, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida supports the more than 13,000 at-risk children in the community between the ages of 6 and 18, providing them with a safe place to learn and grow. Encompassing 30 clubs in Brevard, Osceola, Orange and Seminole counties, membership continues to grow. The organization offers youth development programs and services in efforts to achieve its mission: *To inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens.* Great Futures Start at Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida. Visit www.bgccf.org or facebook.com/bgccf.

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