

Spartanburg County student wins 9th Annual Statewide Youth Leadership Oratorical Forum



Over 100 Community Action Youth, Youth Professionals, Community Leaders, Mentors and Business Leaders came together for the 9th Annual Statewide Youth Leadership Oratorical Forum & Banquet which was held on Saturday, December 16, 2017 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Columbia-Greystone on 200 Stoneridge Drive in Columbia, South Carolina. The time of this event was 11:00am to 2:00pm. This event was hosted by the South Carolina

Association of Community Action Partnerships, Inc. (SCACAP), where Ms. Jessica McMoore is the Executive Director.

The theme was “Speaking Out Loud”. The purpose of the banquet was to empower youth through strengthening their communicative and emotional skills, and increase self-confidence through public speaking.

Mr. Johnathon “Sonny” Cheeks is the 2017 9th Annual Statewide Youth Leadership Oratorical Forum Winner representing Piedmont Community Actions, Inc. Mr. Cheeks was the winner out of nine contestants that participated in this year’s forum. Johnathon presented a very educational and inspiring speech on “STEP UP, SPEAK OUT!” Mr. Johnathon Cheeks is a 17 year-old senior currently attending Spartanburg High School. He is son of John and Gennie Cheeks and the middle child of three. He is an active member of Mountain View Baptist Church. Mr. Cheeks’ passions include music, writing and acting. Mr. Cheeks was the only African American male accepted to governor’s school for performing arts 2015 Summer Academy. After his graduation, Johnathon plans to pursue drama at a top art school. He has applied to Julliard and The American Music and Drama Academy in New York.

Piedmont Community Actions, Inc. is one of fourteen Community Action Agencies in the State of South Carolina serving Spartanburg County and Cherokee County, where Ms. Cynthia Lounds is the Executive Director.

Guest judges for this event were: Ms. Wendy Platt, Certified AVID Teacher at C.A. Johnson High School for Richland One in Columbia, South Carolina, Pastor Yancy McPherson, Pastor of Life Made Whole International Ministries in Columbia, South Carolina, Ms. Sarah Lyles, Executive Director of Palmetto Pride in Columbia, South Carolina, Ms. Tayja Strickland, Undergraduate Student at Savannah College of Art & Design (SCAD) in Savannah, Georgia, Mr. Daniel E. Martin III, Graduate Student at University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina, Dr. Akayleeya Kennebrew, Pharmacist at LTC Health Solutions in West Columbia, South Carolina and Mr. Chip Fallaw, Economic Opportunity Coordinator, SC Office of Economic Advancement Coordinator in Columbia, South Carolina.

SCACAP's Executive Director, Ms. Jessica McMoore, welcomed all of the attendees and shared with them the purpose of the event. "Developing our Leaders of Tomorrow, One Day and Youth at a time", quoted Ms. McMoore. The mission of the SCACAP Statewide Youth Leadership Program (YLP) is to provide income eligible elementary, middle, and high school students with the educational opportunities that target individual improvements in academic, behavioral, and social achievement, career exploration and civic responsibility. SCACAP sponsors many events for the Youth of South Carolina to include a Statewide Youth Council, Statewide Youth Leadership Educational and Cultural Enhancement Tour, Statewide Youth Leadership Institute, Statewide Youth Leadership Professional Development Conference, Statewide Youth Leadership Awareness Day, and the Statewide Youth Leadership Oratorical Forum & Banquet. This event was funded in whole or in part by the SC Association of Community Action Partnerships and the SC Office of Economic Opportunity.