



GREAT FUTURES START HERE: EXCEPTIONAL *BROOKSIDE* TEEN WINS YOUTH OF THE YEAR HONOR FOR *BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF CENTRAL ALABAMA*

Rebekah E. Koen to Now Vie for State Title and Scholarship

Birmingham, AL, February 20, 2014 – Selected among several local outstanding youth, Rebekah E. Koen will compete against other Boys & Girls Club members for the Alabama Youth of the Year title and a \$1,000 college scholarship from Tupperware Brands Corporation.

As the new Youth of the Year for Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Alabama (BGCCA) – Brookside Unit, 17-year old Rebekah will also receive a \$3,000 scholarship to the college of her choice. The runner-up Ora A. (Xan) Shivers is awarded \$2,000 scholarship and three honorable mention awards Dabrianna L. Hall, Andrew R. Isbell and Bryan M. Turner will receive \$1,000 scholarships each; and all the winners will receive a new laptop computer.

Being named Youth of the Year is the highest honor a Boys & Girls Club member can receive. As BGCA's premier youth recognition program, Youth of the Year recognizes outstanding contributions to a member's family, school, community and Boys & Girls Club, as well as overcoming personal challenges and obstacles. Youth of the Year encourages Club members to reach their full potential by achieving academic success, leading healthy lifestyles and contributing to their communities. Youth of the Year honorees are shining examples and living proof that great futures start at Boys & Girls Clubs.

“Rebekah is a true example of an extraordinary young woman. We are proud to recognize her for her sound character, leadership skills and willingness to give back to the community,” said Tom Cleckler, President/CEO, BGCCA. “Congratulations to Rebekah! We are thrilled to help her open the door to a Great Future”.

Rebekah is the second oldest of four children raised by a single mother. Due to several unfortunate circumstances Rebekah and her family have not always had the most stable home environment. Every time Rebekah had to switch schools, she found that her self-esteem was being affected from trying hard to fit in with the other children. Rebekah found the Brookside Boys & Girls Club when she was in the seventh grade.

“Being at the Boys & Girls Clubs gave me a purpose; it gave me a sense of belonging, and today, it still does,” Rebekah said.

Todd Love, Brookside BGC Unit Director stated, “Rebekah does not make excuses or allow circumstances beyond her control to define who she is. Instead, she has chosen to let her attitude, work ethic and moral character show the world that she controls her own destiny. Rebekah is a leader, she does not follow the crowd or lead with her talk, instead she leads by example.”

Rebekah is a 12th grade student at Gardendale High School, where she is ranked #1 in a class of 266 students. She is a three time recipient of the Roy F. Bragg Academic Achievers Award (top 20 highest ranking student of each grade level based on GPA). She is a member of the

National Honor Society,
Gardendale Ambassadors,
Thespian Club,
Manga Club,

Alabama Youth Leadership Development Program, and is
2014 Miss Gardendale High School.

Alabama Youth Leadership Development Program, and is
2014 Miss Gardendale High School.

Rebekah has a strict moral compass and has always done well in school.

Upon graduating high school Rebekah plans to attend the University of Montevallo with a double major in Social Work and Psychology. Rebekah chose the field of social work because she wanted to help prevent other families from having some of the same negative experiences that her family encountered.

Rebekah has been an active volunteer and at the Brookside BGC, she volunteers as a Counselor in Training (C.I.T.). She frequently helps out in the learning center where she tutors and helps young members with their homework. Rebekah participates as a Keystone Club member and serves the community by working to make it a cleaner, safer and a better place to live.

When she saw pre-teen girls at her club struggling with their image and self-confidence she created the – “Girls Empowerment Club”, a program designed to give girls ages 11-12 a forum to share their feelings and get support from their peers. Through BGC, - Rebekah has learned that becoming involved in the community was something to be looked forward to and not dreaded, and that enjoying the work makes all the difference in one’s life.

“The Brookside BGC is important to me because it has helped me to establish a sense of self-worth and being told that you are needed and that you are significant is so much more satisfying in real-life,” Rebekah, said.

If Rebekah wins at the state competition, she will compete for the title of Southeast Region Youth of the Year and an additional \$10,000 scholarship from Tupperware Brands, the recognition program’s national sponsor. Five regional winners will advance to Washington, D.C., in September 2014, to compete for the title of BGCA’s National Youth of the Year. The National Youth of the Year will receive an additional scholarship of up to \$50,000 from The Rick and Susan Goings Foundation and will have the opportunity to meet with the President of the United States in the White House.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Alabama

(BGCCA) exists to provide boys and girls ages six to 18 with a place to learn, grow, and succeed. The oldest Boys & Girls Club in the Southeast, BGCCA has been serving the children in the Birmingham and surrounding communities for 113 years. The Club currently has 9 clubs in 4 counties providing a safe, positive environment promoting Education, Character and Leadership Training, and Healthy Lifestyle Habits. www.BeGreatBirmingham.org

About Boys & Girls Clubs of America

For more than 100 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (GreatFutures.org) has enabled young people most in need to achieve great futures as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Today, some 4,000 Boys & Girls Clubs serve nearly 4 million children and teens through Club membership and community outreach. Clubs are located in cities, towns, public housing and on Native American lands throughout the country, and serve military families in BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide. Clubs provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun and 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, 57 percent said the Club saved their lives. National headquarters are located in Atlanta. Learn more at bgca.org/facebook and bgca.org/twitter.

###

Contact:

Michelle Hewitt, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Alabama, mhewitt@bgcca.org, 205.744.3070(o)

-more-