

Having Our Say

The newsletter of SaySo, Strong Able Youth Speaking Out

Volume 6, Number 1

About SaySo, Inc.

SaySo is a statewide association of youth aged 14 to 24 who are or have been in North Carolina's out-of-home care system. This includes all types of substitute care, including foster care, group homes, and mental health placements.

Our mission is to work to improve the substitute care system by educating the community, speaking out about needed changes, and providing support to youth who are or have been in substitute care.

Become a Member!

If you are interested in joining **SaySo**, let us know! E-mail or write us with the following information: your name, age, and address (including e-mail), region and the kind of out-of-home placement you are or have been in.

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Advocacy in Action! What a Sight! Can You Feel the Power?

By Melinda Medina and Nancy Carter, SaySo, Inc. (Printed in *Fostering Perspectives*, Fall 2004)

North Carolina hosted the second national foster youth leadership conference coordinated by Independent Living Resources, Inc and sponsored by SaySo, Inc. (both of Durham). **Advocacy In Action: Becoming A Powerful Voice for Youth** attracted 120 foster youths representing North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, South Carolina, and South Dakota. The conference was held July 20-22, 2004. Being true to the theme, "Becoming a Powerful Voice for Youth," workshops were facilitated by youth. As a result, youth in attendance seemed to feel more comfortable.



One group of SaySo youths presented their experiences as part of the Governmental Page Program. They commented on how one voice (**You Go Chris**) made the difference in helping pass the \$25 increase for monthly foster family rates. By the end of the workshop, many participants were touched by how being part of the page program helped SaySo members feel like their voice mattered and their life was significant.

Youth facilitators offered twenty workshops on a range of topics related to speaking out responsibly. Other events included an alumni panel of adults who are continuing to make a difference in the area of foster care despite aging out, a trip to UNC Chapel Hill, a dance/pool party, and a stunning keynote presentation by George Duvall, alumni and national speaker from Kentucky.

By the last night of the conference the youth were ready for anything. It was time for the conference headliner, the *Advo-Variety Show*. Youth were confident, comfortable, and ready to showcase their talents. The audience offered their support as youth shared their stories, songs, poetry, and dance. It was a night of tears, laughter, support, and encouragement. It was a conference to remember; a time to cherish and friendships that will last forever.



ATTENTION:

If you are aging out of foster care be sure you get the following things from you social worker:

- Birth certificate,
- Social security card, and
- Immunization records.

SaySo, Inc., helps aged out youth!

And we need your help!

SaySo, Inc., Board of Directors established the Steaphon James Foundation in honor of our board member who has aged off SaySo with a possibly fatal medical condition know as Marfan Syndrome. This foundation was established to help pay the monthly medical expenses required to keep Steaphon alive until he can have open-heart surgery. His Medicaid application was denied and is being appealed. It is anticipated that Steaphon will have surgery within the next few months. If you want to know more about the foundation, Marfan Syndrome or how to help, please contact the SaySo office.

SaySo Has A NEW Website! WWW.SAYSOINC.ORG

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Up to 36 youths assisted with the Give a Child a Smile Rally in Durham (SaySo headquarters). Over 600 suitcases were collected at the rally. Statewide over 2000 were collected!!! Distribution is almost complete!

Onslow County SaySo Member shows off a VAN-LOAD of luggage collected for area foster youths! Way to Go!!

Woo – Hoo!! Wow!!



Our “Give A Child A Smile” project turned out to be a success. We had good turn out, and lots of fun across the state.

- At the Durham Rally the *Durham Association of Realtors* presented SaySo with a check in the amount of \$5854.30 (part to be spent for area foster children and part to help SaySo build a program in Durham).
- NCKids in Greensboro partnered with UNC-G for this project, also collecting over 600 bags. Woo-Hoo!!

We will be submitting our final report to the Make a Difference Day Foundation. We hope they are as proud of SaySo as we are!!

We would like to thank the following sponsors:

*Durham Association of Realtors
Durham Lenders Association
TROSA Moving
Holy Infant Catholic Church
Graphics Ink
Balloons and Tunes*

*Fenwick Foundation
NC State Youth Councils
Immaculata Catholic School
Holy Infant Total Youth Ministry
NC Foster Parent Association
Dr. Thomas Leech /Dr. Bouldin*

- We also want to thank all the collection sites and volunteers.

