



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**LOCAL TEEN NAMED ARIZONA YOUTH OF THE YEAR  
BY BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA  
*Boys & Girls Clubs of America to Celebrate 60 Years of Youth of the Year Winners***

Sasha Anderson, a seven-year member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Colorado River, has been named the Youth of the Year for the state of Arizona by Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA). In addition to winning this prestigious title, Andersen will also receive a \$1,000 scholarship from the Reader's Digest Foundation. Andersen is among hundreds of Youths of the Year across the country that join Boys & Girls Clubs of America in celebrating *A Legacy of Hope & Opportunity* during the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Youth of the Year program.

Being named Youth of the Year is the highest honor a Boys & Girls Club member can receive. The title recognizes outstanding contributions to a member's family, school, community and Boys & Girls Club, as well as personal challenges and obstacles overcome. This program was founded 60 years ago through the generosity of the Reader's Digest Foundation.

"The Reader's Digest Foundation has been the proud sponsor of the Youth of the Year program since 1947," said Susan Fraysse Russ, executive director, Reader's Digest Foundation. "For 60 years, we have had the great honor of saluting amazing teens, like Sasha Andersen, for their dedication to their families, Club and community, and for helping them achieve their academic and career goals."

As a child, Andersen never really had a chance to be a kid. She was thrust into a life of maturity when her mother and father abandoned her family. She became a mother to her three younger brothers, until all were placed in foster care. Although Andersen and three biological brothers are all in different homes, they still keep in touch with each other.

When Andersen's family was separated, she was introduced to the Boys & Girls Club. At first, it was difficult for her to connect and fit in, especially while dealing with her family turmoil. However, it was at the Club that she learned to form new friendships and trust again. Because of her frequent placements in foster homes, she was not able to attend the Club on a regular basis. Nonetheless, she still took advantage of all the Club offered. She was active in the SMART Girls program, which encourages young girls to make wise decisions when faced with peer pressure and risky situations. She volunteered as a Junior Staff member, assisting with cleaning the Club and mentoring the younger

members. Her strong leadership skills earned her a part time staff position. She currently oversees the SMART Girls program and Torch Club pre-teen service program and recently started a cooking club.

Although Andersen has done many things to help her family, she still finds time to help those in her community. By volunteering countless hours at the local senior center and at a local elementary school, Andersen has a true commitment to the lives of others.

She is a junior at River Valley High School and maintains a 3.77 GPA. Andersen is enrolled in several honors classes, is a member of the Spanish Club and was inducted into the National Honor Society. One of her talents is her ability to deliver great speeches. She is captain of the Speech and Debate Team and has earned many first place honors. She recently was named winner of the local Voice of Democracy essay contest and advanced to third in the state.

Andersen plans to continue to use her gift of voice by working as a public relations specialist after earning her bachelor's degree at Baylor University.

"Sasha and all Youth of the Year nominees offer proof that Boys & Girls Clubs across the country are fulfilling their mission of inspiring and enabling young people," said Roxanne Spillett, president, BGCA. "We are thankful to the Reader's Digest Foundation for their long-time support of our Youth of the Year program and for helping Club members reach their goals."

This summer, Andersen will compete against other youth from states located in BGCA's Pacific Region. If named regional winner, she will be awarded a \$10,000 college scholarship and advance to the national competition in Washington. The National Youth of the Year receives an additional \$15,000 college scholarship and will be installed by President George W. Bush during a ceremony in the Oval Office.

As the founding sponsor of the Youth of the Year program, the Reader's Digest Foundation has given nearly \$8 million towards BGCA, and 60 teens have been selected as the National Youth of the Year. For more information about the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program, visit [www.bgca.org/yoy](http://www.bgca.org/yoy).

#### **About Boys & Girls Clubs of America**

Boys & Girls Clubs of America ([www.bgca.org](http://www.bgca.org)) comprises a national network of some 4,000 neighborhood-based facilities annually serving more than 4.6 million young people, in all 50 states and on U.S. military bases worldwide. Known as "The Positive Place for Kids," the Clubs provide guidance-oriented character development programs on a daily basis for children 6-18 years old, conducted by a full-time professional staff. Key Boys & Girls Club programs emphasize leadership development, education and career exploration, financial literacy, health and life skills, the arts, sports, fitness and recreation, and family outreach. National headquarters are located in Atlanta.

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