



The Cindy Platt  
**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB**  
OF TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

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## News Release

With photo of Will Jamerson, outline at end  
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# Boys & Girls Club Picks Rosman High Freshman As Its ‘Youth of the Year’

**BREVARD** – A soft-spoken 16-year-old boy who says his long-time membership at the Cindy Platt Boys & Girls Club has helped him overcome natural shyness and even become a leader, has been named the club’s Youth of the Year.

Will Jamerson, a freshman at Rosman High School, will hold the title for a year. He has been a member of the club since the fourth grade, coming each day to its after-school programs at the Gallimore Road clubhouse.

How does he feel about his new high-profile role at the club? “I’m still a bit nervous,” he says with a smile. He admits to being withdrawn and shy growing up. “But here at the club I’m more active,” he says.

Chip Freeman, an adult mentor who volunteers at the club, meets with Will in the club’s Teen Center once a week. He says the teenager may appear quiet, but he has blossomed into a leader among the 364 members of the club. “The young ones really look up to him, respect him,” Freeman said.

Will says the club’s many programs designed to guide children on the path to becoming responsible citizens have helped him greatly. “The club is a cool place for me to come,” he said.

Will has a mild case of Asperger Syndrome, a developmental disorder that normally affects social interactions and verbal communications. That slightly delayed his early schooling, but he says the Boys & Girls Club has been a major aid in catching up. “Since becoming a member,” he wrote in an essay for the Youth of the Year competition, “I have had the opportunity to grow in many ways, not just personally, but also academically and as a leader.”

It doesn’t surprise his mother, Heather Kilstrom, that Will has risen to new challenges despite Asperger’s. “We teach him to embrace his differences and not to be ashamed or think less of himself,” she said.

To compete for Youth of the Year, club members must be in high school and have attended the club for at least two years. Will has been a member seven years and is well regarded by fellow members and the club’s staff.

Out of 15 teens considered, Will’s name made it easily into a final three. “Staff members had great things to say about one or another of the three,” said Janna Carlson, the club’s Teen Center Director, “but every one of us had something great to say about Will.”

Will is active in club programs, has emerged as a leader and makes healthy decisions, said Carlson. “Even though he’s quiet, he shows initiative.”

Freeman, a real estate Broker at Lake Toxaway, has gotten to know Will well. He agrees with Carlson, and adds that the boy has become adept at making friends. “He loves the club, and he knows everything about everybody!” he said.

Will cites Freeman as one of the best friends he’s made at the club. “Chip listens to me and gives me feedback,” he wrote in his essay. “He points out my strengths and through this relationship I have gained a lot of confidence in myself. I am naturally reserved and generally keep to myself, but because of the relationship with Chip, I feel like I am now more able to approach other kids and carry on conversations.”

Making new friends, making the right choices in life and becoming active outdoors “instead of being consumed by electronics,” are the three top challenges youth face today, says Will.

His favorite subjects in school are math and art and he hopes to go to college and become an engineer. “I like to build things,” he explained.

He and Teen Center Director Carlson will travel to Asheville this week to represent the local club in the Youth of the Year state finals. The North Carolina Youth of the Year title carries with it a \$5,000 college scholarship from Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA).

The winner then competes for the title of Southeast Region Youth of the Year and an additional \$10,000 college scholarship, renewable for four years up to \$40,000. Five regional winners advance to Washington, D.C., in September to compete to become BGCA’s National Youth of the Year. That winner will receive an additional scholarship of \$25,000, renewable each year up to \$100,000, and will have an opportunity to meet with the President in the White House.

“The Youth of the Year program honors our nation’s most awe-inspiring young people on their path to great futures and encourages all kids to lead, succeed and inspire,” said Candice Walsh, the executive director of the local club. “As our Youth of the Year, Will is a fine example of a young man who has strived to achieve, and we’re recognizing him for his success,” she added.

The national Boys & Girls Club organization is more than a hundred years old. Today, more than 4,100 clubs such as Transylvania’s serve nearly 4 million young people annually. They provide a safe place, caring staff and adult mentors, fun, friendship, and high-impact youth development programs during critical non-school hours.

The local club will launch its annual fund drive next month. More about its activities and how to contribute may be found on its website, [bgctransylvania.org](http://bgctransylvania.org).

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Cutline for photo

**Will Jamerson, Youth of the Year at the Cindy Platt Boys & Girls Club, spends time at a typical teenage pastime, video games, but says outdoor activities are more important.**