

SaySo

strong able youth
speaking out



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Children's Home Society
OF NORTH CAROLINA

chsnc.org

SaySo
Saturday
Register Here

chsnc.org/sayso-2020

3.7.20



The Mission of SaySo 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.

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

Founded in 1998 by a stakeholder group of older youths in care, adult caregivers, and adult professionals, SaySo has been recognized with respect in North Carolina and nationally as a youth-driven advocacy organization. Our founding members felt youths needed to be more involved in advocating and policy development for young people in substitute care.

SaySo is a program of
Children's Home Society
For more information regarding the
SaySo Program
Please contact **Carmelita Coleman**,
Program Director:
1-800-632-1400 or email us at
sayso@chsnc.org

SaySo Members Winter Submissions



Youth Contributor **Abby**

Life is like a painting
We can not satisfy
Everyviewer

Someone will say
It is abstract
And another
It is collage

Some may say
It is cubism
Or impressionism
Or surrealism

But no one will say
It is absurd

Life is like a painting
We cannot satisfy
Every viewer

By C.N PremKumar



Youth Contributor **Amber**

I myself am in the foster care system. I have been in this system for over two years now. I can account for this. Having supportive foster parents has meant the world to me. I have never really had parents, so I never got the experience of having a normal child's life. I have learned many things from this. I have learned that foster parents can change the way kids see their lives.

Being in the system has shown me the ways a normal life is supposed to be. I have had plenty of many different foster parents. Some people care about kids and how they are being treated. My home life was not safe. I have been safer in foster care than I ever thought was possible. I know now what it is like to have someone care about me. It has impacted my life in such a powerful way. I never would have guessed I would be here today to be able to talk to you guys about this.

You can seriously impact people so much when you are a foster parent. Foster parenting isn't just a job, but a way of life. You have the chance to help other

kids who have been in the same situation I have been in. You have the power to save lives. You must make that choice for yourself though. I can't tell you what you should do. I can only hope you see that for yourself. Every year millions of kids go through so many traumatic experiences. I have been lucky to be involved in SaySo because SaySo has given me a family when I needed it most. I know I can always come home to SaySo.

Youth Contributor **Rhyan**
18 Things I've learned in 18 years

1. Being/turning 18 doesn't make everything easy.
2. Asking for help makes things easier.
3. Asking for help can be hard.
4. It's easier to surpass your limits and stress yourself out than to set them and stop before you reach them.
5. If you have the money and the ability to, GET YOUR LICENSE.
6. Zip recruiter is where it's at if you want a good paying job. Apply for entry level positions and I promise you'll make a lil money.
7. Getting started is the hardest part, I promise. Once you start, it's an avalanche of momentum.
8. Appreciate who's REALLY in your corner. Don't be afraid to reach out when in need.
9. Stop eating out. IDK how hungry you are. I promise you have food at home. If you must, buy a drink and I promise it'll tide you over.



10. SAVE YOURSELF SOME MONEY! If you have the opportunity to simultaneously have your needs met and save money, DO IT! Even if it's not for a specific purpose. You'll thank yourself later. Just a \$100 here, \$40 there.
11. Comparing your success to the success of your peers will get you nowhere.
12. Breath. You're doing great.
13. Take a moment every morning to just smile in the mirror. No words, no affirmations. Just smile. I know, it's still corny. But just do it. It'll make a difference.
14. Recognize when someone's energy isn't what you need in your life.
15. Vice versa, recognize when you need to check your own energy.
16. Realize what you do and do not have control over
17. Nothing, and I do mean nothing, is permanent. And that's okay.
18. It's hard to love yourself. It doesn't happen quickly, and it's definitely painful. But it happens in bits of ways you won't even realize. It will definitely reflect in the way you interact with others.



Youth Contributor **Mary**

Dear my future,

When will the day come to see you again? There's never a day that you're not on my mind. That beautiful face and beautiful smile. When I think of you it brings tears of joy. What makes me happy is that you don't have to suffer anymore, because God took your pain away. Mom I have always hated to see you suffer and be in pain. It bothers me to see the disease take your eyes. You could not see the beautiful creation God made and the beauty of me growing to the person that I am today. Now that you're gone. God has showed me the person that I am and what a great job you did. When I look in the mirror, I see you, I'm your spitting image. Now I know you can see everything and are watching over me. I always tried to bring a smile to your face and make you happy. Every day of my life I try to make you happy from looking from above. There is no better place that you could be. We had a lot of good times together. Never will I forget that close relationship we had. You were my best friend and my Mom. I can't wait till we meet again.

Sincerely,

Mary

Life HACKS

Securing the Bag (Making Money)

Youth Contributors: Terin & Jennifer

- Create websites
- Brand yourself
- Sell old clothes
- Design and customize clothes
- Sell baked goods
- Make jewelry
- Do hair and nails
- Become a make-up artist



Youth Contributor **Zayden**

Purpose

Everyone has a gift.
Everyone has a purpose.
No matter what you go through. The struggle, and pain is a hassle, but remember you... are a survivor, you're a striver. You're special. Keep that in your mental because you have purpose.
NEVER GIVE UP!



Life HACKS

Making Life Easy

Youth Contributors: Carloe and Trey

- Make Connections
- Learn to Budget
- Buy groceries, and cook at home
- Have a legal side hustle



Youth Contributor **Terin**

Advise to my younger Self:

1. Start where you are with what you have
 2. Try not to hurt other people
 3. Take more chances
 4. If you fail, keep trying
- Germany Kent





Meet: **Naomi** proud working mother | Age: 19

SaySo
Spotlight:
Naomi

At what age did you enter the substitute care system?

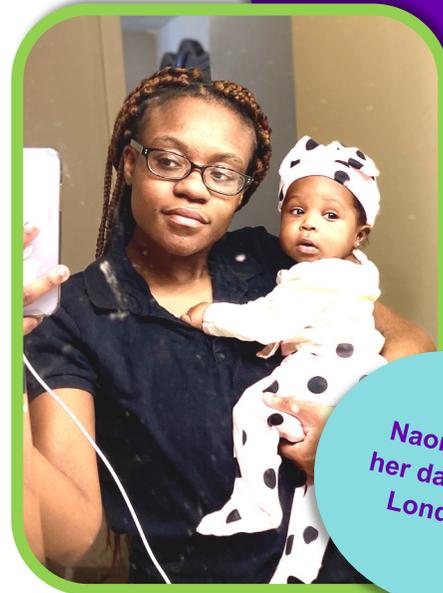
I entered foster care initially at seven and again at twelve.

When did you exit foster care?

I exited foster care at 18, but I'm in the [Foster Care 18-21 Program](#). I have a daughter who four months and her name is Londynn. She is my pride and joy. She keeps me motivated. I have my first apartment and I am a single mom and I LOVE IT. I plan on going back to school but I'm not sure if I want to be a social worker or own a catering company.

Why did you join SaySo?

My purpose for joining SaySo is that I also have two siblings still in care and really want to help implement normalcy and sibling visits and more home visits for other siblings who aged out and have no contact with the other siblings. I just want to help families stay together.



Naomi and
her daughter
Londynn



NC's Foster Care 18 to 21 Program Voluntary Placement

Program Eligibility: An individual who has reached 18 years of age but is not yet 21 years of age, and was in foster care upon his/her 18th birthday, may receive foster care services if the individual is: enrolled in secondary education; enrolled in postsecondary or vocational

education; participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment; employed for at least 80 hours per month; or incapable of completing the educational or employment requirements due to a medical condition or a disability.

Funding: All young adults receiving Foster Care 18 to 21 services are eligible to receive monthly foster care maintenance payments. Payments will be the standard board rate, and will include standardized rates for child placing agencies and residential foster care facilities. Available funding includes Federal Title IV-E funds and State Foster Home Funds (SFHF). Each entry into the program is considered a new foster care episode and will require a new eligibility determination.

Learn about the 18-21 Program and independent living services
for foster children by: [clicking here](#)

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/state-guardianship/independent-living-services-for-foster-children>

Questions from Youth Answered by the SaySo Village



Question:

“How can youth practice selfcare while living in substitute care?” - Lanita Berry

Answer: Selfcare is very important to maintaining your mental, emotional, and physical health. Try these simple techniques:

- Download the **iChill App** (this app is easy to use and has great tools for grounding, mindfulness, and emotional awareness).
- **Take a walk** and spend time in nature. Spending time unplugged and disconnected from technology while outdoors has been proven to improve your mood.
- **Practice using healthy self-talk.** Use your inner voice to guide your thinking to positive thoughts and affirmations like “I’ve got this!” and “It’s going to be okay.”

Question:

“How can youth develop healthy coping skills?” - Lanita Berry

Answer: Being a teenager or young adult can be challenging. Coping and building your resiliency skills will help you to bounce back from adversity. Try to:

- **Regulate your brain.** By practicing, mindfulness, meditation, or yoga you will help to speak calm to your brain.
- **Engage your senses.** By engaging your senses you will help to ground yourself in the moment. Breathe deeply, go for a walk, drink a cool sip of water or listen to calming music.
- **Lean on your supports.** Partner with a mentor or program like SaySo that will support you when life gets complicated. Everyone needs support and encouragement. Need support? Contact SaySo: sayso@chsnc.org, subject Support.

Got
questions?

Get answers!
sayso@chsnc.org



Meet the Village:

From Children’s Home Society’s
Professional Training Team



**Jaleesa
Bartley-Maye**

CHS Foster Care-to-Permanency
Training Coordinator and SaySo
Newsletter Designer

Jaleesa received her two Bachelor of Arts degrees from North Carolina State University in Art Design and Africana Studies. Jaleesa worked with families, their children and youth in early childhood education organizations for over 12 years. She is the author and illustrator of two children’s books. When Jaleesa and her husband became foster parents in 2015, she decided to pursue a career in child welfare to further her passion for advocating for youth in the substitute care system. After adopting their children in 2018, Jaleesa and her husband continue to serve as foster parents. Professionally, Jaleesa is excited to see through the mission of CHS to promote the right of every child to a permanent, safe, and loving family.

jbmaye@chsnc.org

Press! Press! Press! Statewide press made our Make a Difference Day duffle bag collection initiative a huge success!



SaySo member Terrin Covington and Program Director Carmelita Coleman held interviews with local press to advertise SaySo's Make a Difference Day duffle bag collection initiative. SaySo's Terin Covington is pictured preparing for her interview with WFMY News Channel 2 Taheshah Moise, while being moments from receiving donations from WXII News 12 Wanda Starke and CHS WSSU intern Je'Letha Creshan who donated much needed toiletry items!



Are you in need of a duffle bag? Contact SaySo today!

Contact: sayso@chsnc.org Subject: Duffle Bag

Forever Home



This young man has come so far and we are all so proud of him! He found his forever home and it was made official November 2019. Codie, now known as Dylan has served on our state SaySo board and is on his second term with our local board! We love this young man and cannot wait to see what the future holds for him!!



Make A Difference Day: SaySo Gives Back



SaySo Make A Difference Day 2019! It's hard to put into words how emotional today has been! Starting with all the love from the community given to these young people with the collection of suitcases and duffle bags! To how grateful, kind and amazing these young people are! Now all these young people are at our community service site the Durham Nursing home! I wish you all could see the hugs, love and fun conversations being exchanged between the young people and these senior citizens.

Thank you Emily K Center, Amy Levine and the UNC School of Social Work for the donation of all the blankets, hats and gloves. Thank you Kelly Andrews, Eaton Corporation and Carson Grading for your donation of hygiene items, and especially all the SaySo staff.



SaySo Alumni Speak with Campbell Law Students

SaySo alumni visited Campbell University. Alumni spoke with second year law students at Campbell Law School about their experiences with foster care and court hearings while in care. SaySo alumni highlighted best engagement practices for attorneys working with youth.



SaySo Speaks Out



SaySo spoke with NC A&T and UNCG masters degree students at Forsyth County DSS. Members, alumni and staff shared their expertise with the budding students. This collaborative discussion is sure to impact the students professionally as well as the countless youth and families they will serve.



Rising STI Rates Hit Young People Hard

SHIFT NC | shiftnc.org

Earlier this month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that cases of some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have reached an all-time high. Here in North Carolina, these increases are alarming – and they disproportionately impact young people, especially young people of color.

In North Carolina in 2018, young people ages 15-24 accounted for:

- 66% of new Chlamydia diagnoses
- 48% of new Gonorrhea diagnoses
- More than a quarter of all new HIV diagnoses

What does this all mean? It means that reducing STIs in North Carolina will require strategies designed specifically to improve young people's health.

It can be difficult to know why STI rates increase, especially because increased testing – an essential component of keeping people healthy – can increase rates simply by identifying infections that might otherwise go unreported. However, we already know that North Carolina can do more to reduce

the impact of STIs on young people. We can:

Ensure that all young people have access to high quality sex education and other health information so they understand STIs and how to maintain their own health.

- Increase access to teen-friendly healthcare – including testing, treatment, and PrEP for HIV prevention – and build providers' capacity to serve adolescent patients.
- Engage existing tools, systems, and opportunities to address STIs and identify where we need implement new strategies.
- Challenge stigma with both young people and adults while building awareness of the rising STI rates and strategies to address them.
- The pressing need to address STIs is clear. Making sure that North Carolina has strategies designed specifically to reach young people will be essential to turning STI rates around.

Young people, we encourage you to reach out to your social workers and LINKS Coordinators to get resources and clinical service information in your local areas! To have SaySo come talk to your young people or implement Making Proud Choices, the evidence based curriculum for youth in out of home care, please email us sayso@chsnc.org or call 1-800-632-1400.



NC LINKS - North Carolina's Foster Care Independence Program

NC LINKS | ncreach.org

NC LINKS is the North Carolina Foster Care Independence Program for youth and young adults who have experienced time in foster care.

The program provides services and resources to youth and young adults ages 13-21 who are or have been in foster care. NC LINKS provides works with youth and young adults so that when they leave the system, they will have a network of supports and be better equipped with the skills and tools necessary to be successful in life.

Who is eligible?

All youth who are/were in DSS custody in any NC County between the ages 13–21. Youth aged 13-21 who are or were in foster care may request LINKS services from their county Department of Social Services.

Program Services

Foster Care 18 to 21 / Voluntary Placement Agreement

Foster Care 18 to 21 is a program that offers young adults opportunities to continue foster care placement and transition to independence with county child welfare agency supervision. There are some young adults who may not be ready to exit foster care upon turning 18 years of age, and may choose to stay in Foster Care 18 to 21 as long as certain requirements are met. Young adults who exit foster care at age 18 are also able to return to the Foster Care 18 to 21 program at a later date as long as they have not reached their 21st birthday.



Educational Training Voucher

A state-administered, federally funded financial assistance program that offers students up to \$5,000 per year for college or vocational training.

Apply at statevoucher.org

Eligibility: In foster care at age 17; adopted at age 16 or older; not yet reached age 21; accepted to an accredited college; remains a student in good standing – can receive funds until age 23.

NC Reach

A state-administered, federally funded financial assistance program that offers students up to \$10,000 per year for college or vocational training.

Apply at NCReach.org

Eligibility: in foster care at age 18; adopted at age 12 or older; not yet reached age 21; accepted to an accredited state college; remains a student in good standing – can receive funds until age 26.

HUD Announces New Housing Assistance for Youth Leaving Foster Care

HUD recently announced a new initiative to help foster youth secure affordable housing. Foster youth face many challenges once they age out of the system, and one of the biggest is finding somewhere to live when they leave foster care. HUD's new Fostering Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative will provide rental assistance and support services to help former foster youth avoid homelessness and move to economic independence.

www.hud.gov



Do you know about Family First?

What is Family First?

In short, Family First is new legislation that financially supports prevention services to help keep families together while also modifying the funding for congregate care facilities. This is largely due to North Carolina's congress's belief that every child should be raised in a family-like setting.

Why is it important?

This legislation potentially funds intervention services for families keeping them together. Also, kinship care, and a chance to help better support our older youth in North Carolina by extending CHAFEE/LINKS Services until age 23.



Jim Casey, SaySo and North Carolina

"The Work"



Exciting News!!! The SaySo family has been selected by the Jim Casey Youth Initiative to partner here in NC. This means we are all a part of the necessary work here in NC, to achieve our goal of better outcomes for older youth. These outcomes are focused on permanency, stable housing, education success and economic security, and pregnancy prevention and

parenting support. This collaborative work includes being key members of a design team that forms the dialogue for stakeholders and community partners. You should be pleased to know that your very own Community Engagement Coordinator Jaquia Wilson and SaySo board members are a huge part of this work. Let's celebrate Jaquia, Naomi and Abigail for being at the table helping to do the WORK!!!

8 NC LINKS Outcomes

1. Economic Self-Sufficiency
2. Safe & Stable Housing
3. Avoiding Illegal & High Risk Behaviors
4. Postponing Pregnancy & Parenthood
5. Educational & Vocational Training
6. Access to Health Care Services
7. Supportive Connections
8. Normalcy

Greyhound is giving free tickets to runaways who want to return home

Excerpts from article By Elizabeth Wolfe and Saeed Ahmed, [CNN](http://www.cnn.com)

To get a free ticket home, a person between the ages of 12 and 21 must call the NRS helpline (1-800-RUNAWAY). They also must be named on a runaway report and be willing to return to their family. The family or guardian also needs to agree to receive them at home.

If the individual hoping to return home is under the age of 15, Home Free also provides a free ticket for the child's parent or guardian.

More than just a ticket

Before a young person begins their journey home, National Runaway Safeline says it works with them and their guardians to create a plan for their return and locates resources in the community that will be able to provide support once they are settled.

www.cnn.com/2019/12/31/us/greyhound-runaway-kids-home-free-ticke



Scholarship Opportunities SaySo Saturday

On Saturday, March 7th, during SaySo Saturday two scholarships will be awarded: the Kendall E. Johnson and Kaleb Joshua Rancer Scholarships will be presented by their families respectively. Apply for the scholarships below by Friday, February 22nd.

Kaleb Joshua Rancer Scholarship

In Memoriam: The Kaleb Joshua Rancer Scholarship will be presented by the family of Kaleb Rancer on SaySo Saturday, Saturday March 7th.

.....

At least two scholarships of up to \$1,000 will be awarded for the general needs of a community college or undergraduate student who spent time in foster/substitute care as a teen or aged out of the foster/substitute care system. Youth who were in Foster Care as teens.

.....

Criteria:

- Youth who were in Foster Care as a teen (14 & older)
- Youth who were adopted or aged out (18-24)
- Involvement with LINKS and/or SaySo

[Apply Here](https://tinyurl.com/Rancer20)

<https://tinyurl.com/Rancer20>

Kendall E. Johnson Scholarship

In Memoriam: Kendall E. Johnson Scholarship will be presented by the Family of Kendall Johnson on SaySo Saturday, Saturday March 7th.

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One \$500 scholarship will be awarded for the general needs of a community college or undergraduate student who spent time in foster/substitute care as a teen or aged out of the foster/substitute care system.

.....

Criteria:

- Youth who were in Foster Care as a teen (14 & older)
- Youth who were adopted or aged out (18-24)
- Involvement with LINKS and/or SaySo

[Apply Here](https://tinyurl.com/SaySoJohnson20)

<https://tinyurl.com/SaySoJohnson20>



Thank you for helping us to collect over **4,000** bags during our duffle bag collection initiative!



**Thank you
generous
Donors!**

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