

Having Our Say

The newsletter of SaySo, Strong Able Youth Speaking Out

Volume 5, Number 5

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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SaySo Members Head to Raleigh!

Press Release dated June 23, 2004! SaySo (Strong Able Youth Speaking Out) youths, representing those who are or have been in North Carolina's foster care system, will participate in the House, Senate, and Governor's Page Programs during the week of June 28. Nine youths have been selected from Wake, Guilford, Moore, and Cumberland counties to learn more about the legislative process and North Carolina's government; sharing information about the foster care system and promoting the page programs to other foster youths. This is the first time foster youths have participated in this program as a group. They will be in the Capitol working side-by-side with those who make the decisions, which govern their lives.

NC Government Page Program

This edition written by Glenda Easterling, Montgomery County, Moore LINKS Program

What is the Page Program? The Page Program is a program that enables teenagers to experience the moment of a lifetime. It consists of House, Senate, and Governor pages. Each division of pages lives with a different host family in their home. Each page is roomed together with another page or pages in the host home. The host treats you like you are apart of the family. During the course of the week you follow a schedule mentally that you have become adjusted too. You wake up at 6:30 or 7:00 AM to wash up for breakfast. You return to your room to get dressed and prepared for work. When you arrive to work...you check in for new experience.

Day ONE: intern and supervisor tell the pages what is expected and consequences if they do not comply with the rules. Pages are issued nametags. They are expected to wear those nametags at all times. We were asked to tell our fellow pages our names and something significant about ourselves. The intern then explained the daily schedule: work starts at 8 AM, put on your nametag, sign up for a committee meeting, and sign up for the position that you prefer to hold in the chamber (House or Senate). Governor Pages are assigned a department. Whenever it is time for pages to go to committee meetings they must tell the intern or supervisor. When you are not in meeting you can go to lunch or stay in the office and watch movies. When going to lunch, pages have the option of the cafeteria, snack bar, or a fast food restaurant down the street. All pages are required to return to the office at a certain time to get ready for session.

Going into session! Session sometime starts at 1, 2, or 3 and ends at 5 PM. When going to the chamber, the intern, supervisor, and all pages walk together. You must enter the chamber from the back door. All pages sit in the back or stand against the wall until there is seating available. When the Speaker says the session is in order the first string pages must take their respective places in the chamber. During the course of the session representatives are recognized to read a bill and request a vote. If one of the representatives disagrees about a bill they must be recognized by the Speaker to speak on that particular bill. At times a representative will have a question for another representative. To be able to ask a question, representative A has to ask the Speaker permission to ask representative B a question. The Speaker must then ask representative B if he or she yields to representative A. If representative B yields then representative A may ask their question. Sometimes the debates are really cool and interesting. You get to see that our legislators really do care about what they are doing.

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Having a job in the chamber. During the beginning of the week the pages go into the chamber and learn about the positions and responsibilities. The “do’s and don’ts” of the jobs are outlined by the supervisor and intern. **Do’s** include smiling during session even if it is boring, say “excuse me” when walking by a representative, stack all papers on the desk neatly, and ask for help if you do not understand something. **Don’ts** include chewing gum in the chamber, break the debate line of the representatives, walk down the middle isle of the chamber, drink the water in the chamber, and talk while in the chamber. They have pages set up in “strings” which makes it easier to rotate jobs. Every 15 minutes the strings rotate. In the back you have runners and they run errands for the representatives and pass out papers. In the end all pages are very tired and are ready to return to their host family. By the end of the week though, pages are sad to leave. We all got tight and loved our host families.

Voices from the Pages

Most pages (except Curtina) decided they don’t want to be a politician but saw lots of other jobs involved in government work that were interesting. Some words to express their time as a page: **Curtina K.** (Senate page) said, “I was exposed to more understanding of possibilities. Come ready to learn. I could be governor! They’re just people! I got to meet with my senator.” **Vivian J.** (Senate page) said, “Be able to communicate with other pages. It is hard to understand especially if you are not familiar with politics. Would recommend other youth in foster care and in SaySo take a part in the page program because you expand your horizons. You get to speak with the people who make the state what it is. I didn’t want people to know where I came from it’s more about where I’m going!” **Glenda E.** (House page) said, “I really had a wonderful time. This was a first for me and I really wanted to stay another week. I enjoyed my friends and host family. I had the opportunity to take a picture with the governor. It’s not who I was but who I’ve become to be. It’s not what I knew it’s what I found out. I would recommend this program to anybody and tell them to have an open mind about everything.” **Rodney A.** (Governor’s page) “I was taller than Governor Easley! I thought it would be all business but it was more laid back and a lot of fun. Legislators and pages were comfortable and chillin’ by the first day.” Other pages were **Sierra R** and **Laura S.** (House); **Milton T.** and **Sandy T.** (Governor) **Advice!** Here’s some advice if you want to be a page. **1** Keep smiling people like it. **2** Be open to conversation with people. **3** You get to learn just by being in the atmosphere. **4** You get to meet people from all over. **5** Confidentiality is a huge issue. **6** Secretaries of the cabinets are really nice and open to chat. **7** Be very cooperative it’s makes you job a whole lot easier. **8** Bring Band-aids and comfortable shoes. **9** Show yourself as a friendly person. **10** In the end say thank you!

One voice can make a difference! **Chris S.** (Senate page) spoke with Lieutenant Gov. Beverly Purdue who is the first female Lt. Gov. They first discussed some personal interests and then turned to foster care. Chris told her how the House wanted to pass a bill that would increase payments to foster families but the Senate would not agree. Chris spoke of his foster family experiences. Gov. Purdue said that she would return to the Senate to ask for a special provision to increase the payments. We’re not sure if this will pass but...**see the difference one voice can make?**

