



**Charleston County School of
the Arts**

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Cynthia Ambrose
Deputy Superintendent of Learning
Services

Kim Wilson
Executive Director of Secondary
Learning Community

Shannon Cook, Ed.D.
Principal

For Immediate Release
May 10, 2018

Contact:
Shannon Cook, 843-529-4990

Media Release

SOA Senior Set to Compete for Oratorical World Championship

North Charleston, SC – Caleb Smith will graduate from Charleston County School of the Arts (SOA) May 31, 2018. However, his high school career will unofficially last until late June, thanks to his win at the Optimist Club International State Level Oratorical Competition this past weekend. The senior at SOA captured the crown Saturday, May 5, 2018 at the Sumter Opera House in Sumter, SC; nine other students from South Carolina participated in the event.

Smith, a theater major at SOA, earned a \$2,500 scholarship check and a trip to St. Louis University in St. Louis, MO to compete in Optimist Oratorical Regional and World Championships June 27-29, 2018. The topic, as it has been throughout the year, will be “Where are My Roots of Optimism?”

“It’s my first time competing in the Optimist Club oratorical contest and I couldn’t be anymore grateful and ecstatic than I am now,” Smith stated. “The opportunity has been nothing short of amazing, challenging, and exhilarating. It has really made me work hard, and consequently, made me a better orator. I hope to continue this run and win the regional and world championships. Most importantly, I want to make connections with [my fellow competitors] in St. Louis.”

Smith advanced to the state event (District level) by winning the local (Club level) and Lowcountry regional (Zone level) titles earlier this spring. His speech, which incorporated poetry, described how a flower can weather storms, and compared that to his desire to change the narrative about how minorities are viewed in the United States. Smith also explained to the judges the lessons he learned from his family members when it comes proving what minorities are able to accomplish and contribute to society.

“Caleb has written a dynamic speech, and it is a tribute to all those, particularly his parents, who have engendered his optimism,” explained Dr. John Cusatis, an English teacher at SOA who is serving as Smith’s sponsor for this competition. “The passionate intensity with which he delivers it allows every word to ring true. He will awe the audience and judges in St. Louis just as he did in Sumter.”

"I want to thank the Optimist Club, my parents, Dr. Cusatis, Dr. Al Eads of the West Ashley Optimist Club, and everyone else who has supported me throughout my efforts," added Smith. "I wouldn't be where I am now if it were not for them."

The Optimist International Oratorical World Championships have been around since 1928. The competition at the state level in South Carolina started in 1954; before that, the District was comprised of both North Carolina and South Carolina.

For more information about Smith's success in the state competition, or his upcoming trip to St. Louis to compete in the Optimist Oratorical Regional and World Championships, please contact SOA Principal Dr. Shannon Cook at (843) 529-4990.

Photo Caption (for group shot)

Pictured L to R: Dr. Al Eads, Jr. of the West Ashley Optimist Club, Caleb Smith, Senior Theater Major at SOA, and Dr. John Cusatis, English Teacher at SOA (and Smith's sponsor)

###

About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.