

**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

Erica Taylor 843-937-6303

# Media Release

## **CCSD Graduate Brings Home Oratorical World Championship**

Office of Strategy and  
Communications

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Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Erica S. Taylor  
Chief Officer

**Charleston, SC** – Caleb Smith went to St. Louis, MO to simply represent his family, the West Ashley Optimist Club, school, and state to the best of his ability at the Optimist International Oratorical World Championships. He did that, and more. Smith, who graduated from Charleston County School of the Arts (SOA) this spring, won the 2018 world title on June 29 at Saint Louis University's Center for Global Citizenship.

The two-day competition, which featured 54 students from a total of eight different countries, started on June 28 with the nine regional contests: Global Region, Northeast and Great Lakes Region, Great Plains Region, Mid-Atlantic Region, Southeast Region, Southwest Region, Middle America Region, West Coast Region, and Saint Lawrence Region. Smith bested six other students in the regional round to advance to the next stage. An official with Optimist International Club shared with Smith's family members the Southeast Region was one of the most competitive groups of this year's event.

On the morning of the second day, the Region Championship winners were announced; forty minutes later, the speaking order for the World Championship was determined. Once again, Smith delivered an impressive speech, and became the first Optimist International Oratorical World Champion from South Carolina.

"It is humbling and overwhelming," exclaimed Smith. "To have been able to compete against such talented people from around the world was great. To be named the 2018 World Champion is a lot to take in. I am beyond grateful to Optimist International for giving me a platform to share my thoughts and my voice and for giving other young people the chance to do the same."

This is the third year of the World Championships, but Optimist International has sponsored speaking contests at the local and state level since 1928.

Smith earned \$15,000 in scholarship money for his victory on the world stage, and \$5,000 for winning in the regional round. He already received a \$2,500 scholarship check for [winning the state title](#) in May.

"We are thrilled to celebrate Caleb's success," added Dr. Shannon Cook, SOA's principal. "He is an extraordinary communicator and remarkable young man."

The topic for this year's competition was "What are My Roots of Optimism." Smith actually started this journey by winning at the club (local) level when he delivered his speech at West Ashley High School. He advanced to the zone level, then to the district (state) level, and eventually, the World Championships in St. Louis.

"What distinguished his speech for me was that it was not just personal, but universal," said Dr. John Cusatis, Smith's English teacher at SOA. "After defining the roots of his own optimism, he stressed the importance of inspiring and sustaining optimism in others. Winning the world title was no minor accomplishment; it was a giant achievement that required the highest level of commitment, confidence, and charisma. Yet his acceptance speech was filled with gratitude and humility."

To learn more about Optimist International, visit [Optimist.org](http://Optimist.org).

For more about this impressive accomplishment for Smith, please contact Charleston County School District's Office of Strategy and Communication at (843) 937-6303.

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#### **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.