



## **OUTSTANDING BRANSON TEEN NAMED YOUTH OF THE YEAR**

Orlin Harrison is a true example of an extraordinary young man. Orlin is 14 years old and a freshman at Branson High School. He became a member of the Boys & Girls Club in 2007. Orlin has faced many struggles in his life. Because his biological parents could not take care of him, he lives with his grandparents along with his little brother and baby sister. His little brother has medical problems that Orlin has to help with. Although sharing the responsibility of caring for his siblings in addition to attending school and participating in extra curricular activities, Orlin never complains. At a young age, Orlin was the victim of parental kidnapping. During the ordeal, the car he was abducted in rolled and caught fire. Thankfully, no one was harmed; but this traumatic experience caused Orlin to withdraw and become a scared and timid boy. Afraid he would be kidnapped again, he spent the next several years never leaving his grandmother's side. Orlin says, "I feel that the Club is my second home, actually it's my second family. Ever since I started going to the Club I feel safe, I feel protected, and I feel that I can be a regular teenager. The Club has had an impact on my life."

Recently, Orlin was named Youth of the Year; the highest honor a local Boys & Girls Club organization can bestow on a member. The title recognizes outstanding contributions to a member's family, school, community and Boys & Girls Club, as well as personal challenges and obstacles overcome. "We are so proud of Orlin! He has overcome so much in his life and is a fabulous role model for any young person," said Laci Bainbridge, Branson Unit Director. In addition to playing Junior Varsity football at Branson High School and being an active member of the National Honor Society, Orlin volunteers through the Club's Teen Center programs, at the Merriam Woods Police Department and a local nursing home. "The staff keep me focused on my goals and I really do make better choices since I've been coming. I also get the chance to give back to the community through Keystone Club and other community service projects. I enjoy helping and it's really cool to be able to help clean up the parks or feed the hungry. It makes me feel worthwhile. Everything about the Club is great. I love the Teen Center, it's a really fun place to hang out with my friends." Orlin aspires to play football in college to help with tuition and eventually become a veterinarian. "The gym is awesome and I really enjoy being able to practice football and baseball. The staff have really helped me to work on my sports skills. Mr. Ben (Teen Director) helped me to make the baseball team; we'd been practicing for weeks. I am lucky to be able to go to the Club. Otherwise my brother and I would have to go home and be stuck there until my grandparents got home. Coming to the Club gives me something to do. It's so much fun to go swimming and bowling and even down to the Landing. Mr. Ben takes us everywhere; he even makes us go visit colleges so that we can decide where we want to go when we graduate high school. He says college is not an option and he expects each of us to go and get a degree. That's what I love about the Club. People really care about me."