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Governor's Youth Leadership Forum prepares students with disabilities for leadership in their communities

TROY – The 18th annual Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) will be held on the campus of Troy University from June 5 - June 9.

Thirty-eight students from around the state are expected to participate in the five-day event, which is sponsored each year by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) and hosted by Troy University. The forum helps shape high school students with disabilities through sessions on self-esteem, self-advocacy, career choice, independent living options, and leadership.

Forum delegates are carefully selected through a statewide competition that seeks students with disabilities who display leadership potential. Chosen delegates represent the state's demographics in terms of geography, gender, ethnicity, and types of disabilities. To be eligible, students must be a junior or senior in high school, be between 17 and 21 years of age, and have a disability.

"YLF provides an opportunity like no other for young people with disabilities to realize their full potential as leaders within their community," said Karen Jenkins, YLF coordinator. "We want to empower our youth and encourage these students to become involved in all aspects of society."

During the forum, delegates will write a Personal Leadership Plan (PLP) to assist them in becoming leaders in their communities. In addition to their other activities at YLF, the group will spend a day in Montgomery to tour the Capitol and learn about state government. While in Montgomery, delegates will have an opportunity to visit with and seek guidance from successful adults with disabilities at the Angeline Pinckard Mentor Luncheon.

YLF won't be all work for the delegates. To develop social skills, they will also be treated to a dance and a talent show. On the first night of the event, the delegates will travel to Montgomery to attend a Biscuits baseball game.

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services is the state agency whose mission is to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.

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PROVIDING SERVICES TO ALABAMIANS WITH DISABILITIES