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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—11/20/17

INTRODUCING THE NEWEST RECIPIENTS OF THE YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT VOICE AWARD

CHAPEL HILL, NC-Sophie Jin and Abby Roussin are making a difference in the local community when it comes to mental health advocacy and action. The two juniors from East Chapel Hill High School were honored at this year's 9th Annual North Carolina "One Community in Recovery" Conference, which took place at the Village Inn Event Center in Clemmons, N.C., on November 9, 2017. Jin and Roussin are the first-ever recipients of the newly created Youth/Young Adult Voice Award, which recognizes individuals under the age of 22 in this state who have dedicated their individual talents, whether through sharing their story, advocacy or volunteering, to successfully promote mental health and/or substance use recovery and resilience.

In its ninth year, the NC "One Community in Recovery" Conference is fostering the continuing growth of the North Carolina Recovery Movement by inspiring and informing participants to get recovery programming up and running in their communities, showcasing some of the most progressive recovery practices, and bringing the community of providers and individuals in recovery together as students and partners. The goal of the conference is to educate and motivate participants to apply principles of recovery in their personal and professional lives.

The mission of Faith Connections on Mental Illness is to work with all local faith communities to advocate for and to support and educate individuals and families who are living with mental illness.

Meeting at St. Thomas More ♦ 940 Carmichael St. ♦ Chapel Hill, NC 27514
On FaceBook ♦ <https://www.facebook.com/faithconnectionsmentalillness>

Faith Connections on Mental Illness (FCoMI), a local nonprofit organization that works with all faith communities to support and advocate for individuals and families who are living with mental illness nominated the two women along with the National Alliance on Mental Illness Orange (NAMI Orange).

"For me to have been recognized at this year's conference and receive the Youth/Young Adult Voice Award, it means that they gave me the ability to have a voice because they were there to hear it," said Roussin, a theatrically inclined actor who has performed in several school plays. "The award has motivated us to go further and reach more people in our advocacy for mental illness," said Jin, a member of numerous public speaking clubs including Model United Nations and DECA. "Speaking out not only motivates others, but also establishes a community of support and bravery."

The duo began attending Mental Health Community Connections (MHCC) meetings in the spring of 2016 where they listened to teachers, counselors, and psychologists discuss ways to make learning environments more inclusive for those with mental health problems. Jin and Roussin recognized the prevalent stigma within schools and presented on the topic at this year's FCoMI Conference. They sparked urgency over the topic amongst teachers and administrators who had failed to realize the level of disconnect in communication when addressing mental health issues for students. Jin is hoping to study economics in college, and is particularly interested in examining fiscal interactions between diverse countries. More immediately though, she would like to engage in more advocacy within the community and simply get more sleep. Roussin is strongly considering studying and performing social work in the future. The two plan to continue collaborating with fellow students and community members to address specific mental health issues that are often overlooked and/or misunderstood.

FCoMI will host the "Cultivating Mental Health: Hope and Healing" Conference on April 13, 2018, a daylong event addressing how individuals and their families can experience hope and healing while managing symptoms of depression and addiction. Additionally, speakers will explain faith communities' role in supporting those living with mental health challenges, and facilitate innovative and localized solutions to those living with serious mental health conditions.

For more information regarding this year's NC "One Community in Recovery" Conference, further examples of Jin's and Roussin's passion for mental health issues at work, or ways in which to help support FCoMI's continued mission of including and educating individuals and families who are living with mental health, contact info@faithconnectionsonmentalillness.org or visit our organization's website www.faithconnectionsonmentalillness.org. # # #

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