

Building a Culture of Health in New Jersey: Advancing the Population Health Agenda



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Building a Culture of Health in NJ Conference Spotlights Policies and Opportunities to Promote Healthy Communities

Former Food Network Chopped Junior Contestant shared how NJPHK's Healthy Family Weekend inspired him to make better food choices

Trenton, NJ –November 30, 2016 –The New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids (NJPHK), a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, co-hosted the Building a Culture of Health in New Jersey: Advancing the Population Health Agenda Conference on Wednesday, November 30th at the Pines Manor in Edison, N.J.

More than 400 public health professionals, social workers, educators, dietitians, and community leaders from across the state came together to learn how communities can create policy and environmental changes that can surround children and families with opportunities to make healthy choices.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 63% of adults and nearly one in four children ages 10-17 in New Jersey are overweight or obese. This leads to a plethora of health issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol-- chronic illnesses that were in the past generally associated with adults instead of children.

“The New Jersey Department of Health is investing in wellness, prevention and community engagement to improve population health in our state,” said New Jersey Health Commissioner Cathleen D. Bennett. “By funding our communities, we empower them with the tools to keep the well healthy, support those at risk for health problems and prevent those with chronic conditions from getting sicker.”

This year’s keynote speaker was Dr. Maya Rockeymoore, president and CEO of Global Policy Solutions; a prominent Washington, DC-based social change nonprofit agency dedicated to making policy work for people and their environments. Rockeymoore also directs Leadership for Healthy Communities, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) dedicated to helping state and local elected and appointed officials advance policies that support healthy eating, active living and childhood obesity prevention (click [here](#) for a detailed bio).

The audience also heard from 10-year old Joshua Pantoja Jr., who discussed how his participation in the NJPHK’s Healthy Family Weekend cooking class inspired him to become a contestant on the *Food Network’s Chopped Junior* show earlier this year.

The one-day Culture of Health Conference focused on: the linkage between health and healthcare; how policy and environmental changes can better support communities, and the impact of private and public decision making on health. Local experts led morning and afternoon workshops on a variety of public health topics including: early childhood obesity prevention, food access, behavioral health, hospital/community partnerships, contributions of school nurses, and national equity. For more information about the conference, click [here](#).

Healthy Champions Recognized During Conference

During the conference, Culture of Health Champion Awards were presented in recognition of organizations and individuals who are committed to creating changes that surround kids and families with opportunities to make healthy choices. The 2016 award recipients were:

Rutgers University

- Recognized for being a forerunner in New Jersey in establishing programs that advance nutrition, physical activity, health promotion and chronic disease prevention.

Joshua Pantoja, Jr.

- Recognized for his commitment to helping his family and friends make healthier choices.

The conference is co-sponsored by the New Jersey Partnership of Healthy Kids, New Jersey YMCA State Alliance; American Academy of Pediatrics, New Jersey Chapter; New Jersey Health Initiatives; Shaping NJ; New Jersey Department of Health; and Get Moving – Get Healthy New Jersey, Dept. of Family and Community Health Sciences.

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About New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids

New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids (NJPHK) is a statewide program of the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) with technical assistance and direction provided by the [New Jersey YMCA State Alliance](#). The goal of the program is to convene, connect and empower community partnerships across the state to design and implement childhood obesity prevention strategies that support access to affordable healthy foods and increase opportunities for safe physical activity in the cities of Camden, Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, and Vineland. For more information, visit: www.njhealthykids.org. Follow NJPHK on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is the largest private foundation in New Jersey and the nation's largest philanthropy working to improve the health and health care of all. The Foundation is striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. RWJF has invested more than \$1.5 billion in New Jersey since 1972. For more information, visit <http://www.rwjf.org/nj>. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at <http://www.rwjf.org/twitter> or Facebook at <http://www.rwjf.org/facebook>.