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**Joshua Pantoja Jr. of Mercer County Receives
New Jersey Partnership For Healthy Kids Champion Award**

Award recognizes 10-year old's leadership and commitment in creating changes that surround families with opportunities to make healthy choices

Edison, New Jersey –November 30, 2016– New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids (NJPHK), a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, presented its “Healthy Kids Champion” award to 10-year old Hamilton resident, Joshua Pantoja, Jr. during the [Building a Culture of Health in New Jersey: Advancing the Population Agenda Conference](#) on November 30, 2016 at the Pines Manor in Edison, NJ.

The Healthy Kids Champion award is presented to outstanding leaders for their commitment and contributions in New Jersey. The award acknowledges Pantoja’s commitment to helping his family and friends make healthier choices. Last year, Pantoja attended NJPHK’s Healthy Family Weekend Retreat at the YMCA Frost Valley where he participated in healthy cooking classes. The cooking class inspired Pantoja to make healthier choices, as well as served as the catalyst for him to become a contestant on the Food Network’s Chopped Junior program. Pantoja regularly cooks for his family and friends and has a container garden where he grows watermelon, jalapeno peppers, cucumbers, and tomatoes.

“Joshua is an inspiration and embodies the mission of NJPHK to reduce childhood obesity by making the healthy choice the easy choice,” said Darrin Anderson, deputy director, NJPHK. “It is an honor to present this award to Joshua who, at such a young age, is already making such a positive impact on his family and overall community.”

Nearly one in three young people are either overweight or obese, placing them at increased risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease and other serious health conditions.

Over the past five years, NJPHK and its community partners have made significant strides in implementing more than 200 environmental and policy changes to increase access to physical activity and healthy eating. These changes include: assisting with the development of school wellness policies, renovating playgrounds, installing bike lanes, partnering with more than 160 local corner stores to include healthier product offerings launching healthy farmer's markets in combination with health screenings and hosting healthy family weekends for more than 100 families across the state.

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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 or 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 on Facebook at <http://www.rwjf.org/facebook>.