



The New Jersey State Youth of the Year program is a premier youth leadership initiative that recognizes the exceptional achievements of Boys & Girls Club teens. Youth of the Year candidates exemplify excellence in the organization's four core outcome areas: Health and Well-Being, Character and Leadership, Academic Success, and Life and Workforce Readiness.

Each year, local Boys & Girls Clubs select an outstanding individual between the ages of 14 to 18, to represent their respective club in a transformative journey. With unwavering dedication, hard work, and guidance from Club staff, nominees strive to be selected as the New Jersey State Youth of the Year or Military Youth of the Year. Throughout the selection process, candidates are paired with mentors and attend specialized training sessions to refine their skills in public speaking, interviewing, and essay writing in preparation for the state competition and beyond.

The program honors the most exceptional teen leaders from across the state, culminating in the selection of two individuals to represent New Jersey in both regional and national competitions. These distinguished youth become ambassadors for Boys & Girls Club members and advocate for the broader voice of youth across the nation.

Finalists in the Youth of the Year program engage in a formal interview before a panel of esteemed judges. Candidates are evaluated based on their public speaking ability, essay submissions, interview performance, and overall application quality. The New Jersey State and Military Youth of the Year will be announced during the New Jersey Youth of the Year Reception and Award Ceremony on May 12, 2026, at Montclair State University. Finalists will also receive over \$50,000 in scholarship funds to assist in their pursuit of higher education.

Thanks to additional support from Raymond James, the National Presenting Partner, the Youth of the Year program enables young leaders to advance from local recognition to state, regional, and national platforms. The New Jersey State Youth of the Year will compete for the Northeast Regional Youth of the Year title in June, with an opportunity to win a \$20,000 renewable scholarship. In September, five regional winners and one military youth representative will compete for the National Youth of the Year title and a \$50,000 renewable scholarship.

The Youth of the Year program is a life-changing experience that empowers young people to lead, excel, and serve as powerful voices for their generation, embodying the belief that GREAT FUTURES START HERE—at Boys & Girls Clubs.