

Boys & Girls Clubs of America Names New Jersey Teen Carlos Polanco National Youth of the Year

Boys & Girls Clubs of Clifton youth awarded \$145,000 in college scholarships, organization's highest honor representing four million kids and teens

PR Newswire, Washington, D.C., September 27, 2017 - Last night Boys & Girls Clubs of America named Carlos Polanco [National Youth of the Year](#) in a ceremony held at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. He accepted the honor before an audience that included members of Congress and Boys & Girls Clubs of America partners and supporters, including event emcee, actor and Club alum Nick Cannon and Grammy-award winning musician Kelly Rowland, among others.

Youth of the Year is Boys & Girls Clubs of America's premier recognition program for Club teens and the National Youth of the Year title is the highest honor a Club member can receive, representing the voice of four million Club youth. Celebrating its 70th year, the Youth of the Year program has recognized young people for their outstanding leadership, service, academic excellence and dedication to living a healthy lifestyle. The Youth of the Year program is presented by Disney with support from signature partner Toyota, along with additional partners Taco Bell Foundation and University of Phoenix. The National Youth of the Year will receive \$145,000 in academic scholarships, as well as a trip to Disney World and a brand new Toyota Corolla. This year, the Youth of the Year program will award more than \$1 million in scholarships to Club teens.

"My Boys & Girls Club has taught me that I can be whatever I want to be," said Polanco. "They taught me that I should always dream big and go after my dreams. Today, as the National Youth of the Year, I am ready to represent and advocate for all 4 million of our Boys & Girls Club kids and teens."

Polanco's family came to the United States from the Dominican Republic when he was 5 years old. He started attending the Boys & Girls Club, where he discovered his passion for education. Polanco helped found the Clifton Student-Union, which is a student run, student-led advocacy

group. In this capacity he's helped rewrite the school dress code, addressed the lack of AP classes and led a peaceful march of more than 350 students advocating for fair school funding.

Through the support of his Boys & Girls Club, Carlos became a leader, following his passions to make a difference in his community.

"Carlos symbolizes seven decades of youth leaders that have found a great future with Boys & Girls Clubs," said Jim Clark, president and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of America. "Youth of the Year recognizes teens who demonstrate the critical impact that Clubs, and thousands of youth development professionals working at Boys & Girls Clubs around the country, have on the lives of young people. Carlos will be an incredible voice, advocating for the needs of all young people in our country."

Becoming National Youth of the Year is an exciting and inspiring journey. Starting on the local level, Clubs select Youth of the Year representatives who then progress to state and regional competitions, culminating with the National Youth of the Year Celebration which features youth from each of the five regions, as well as the National Military Youth of the Year. Regional finalists are awarded up to \$45,000 in scholarships from Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and the National Youth of the Year is awarded an additional \$25,000 renewable for four years up to \$100,000.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America's [National Youth of the Year](#) recognition program is presented by Disney, who has supported Boys & Girls Clubs of America for more than 50 years, empowering young people to reach their full potential and providing youth with access to the tools they need to build the great futures they imagine. Toyota, the Signature Sponsor of Youth of the Year, is dedicated to supporting and inspiring the next generation of engineers, thinkers and new leaders who will help drive the American economy. Since 2011, Toyota has provided the National Youth of the Year with a new Corolla. Additional support is provided by University of Phoenix and the Taco Bell Foundation.

"At The Walt Disney Company, we are committed to being advocates and champions for youth and families around the world. Which is why we are so proud to help honor Carlos, the five other national finalists and all the youth that participated in this program," said Elissa Margolis

Senior Vice President Enterprise Social Responsibility for The Walt Disney Company. “We are truly inspired by the leadership, compassion, and dedication demonstrated by these remarkable young people.”

As Youth of the Year, Carlos will serve as the official spokesperson for Boys & Girls Clubs of America and its [Young Alumni & Friends Club](#) that connects former members who are living proof of the impact of Boys & Girls Clubs. For more information about the Youth of the Year program, visit <https://www.bgca.org/programs/youth-of-the-year>.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of America

For more than 150 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (bgca.org) has enabled young people most in need to achieve great futures as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Today, 4,300 Clubs serve 4 million young people through Club membership and community outreach. Clubs are located in cities, towns, public housing and on Native lands throughout the country, and serve military families in Boys & Girls Clubs of America-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide. They provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun and friendship, and high-impact youth development programs on a daily basis during critical non-school hours. Club programs promote academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles. In a Nielsen Survey of alumni, 54 percent said the Club saved their lives. National headquarters are located in Atlanta. Learn more at Boys & Girls Clubs of America’s [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).