



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF GREATER REDLANDS-RIVERSIDE

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PRESS RELEASE

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Three High School Students Named Youth of Year Ambassadors

REDLANDS – Three local high school students have been named 2021 Youth of the Year Ambassadors for Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside.

The Ambassadors – Joshua Fernandez, Joseph Fernandez and Nicole Perez -- were chosen for their character and citizenship, academics, and commitment to a healthy lifestyle. They each wrote essays on three topics – Club experience, their personal brand, and their vision for America's youth -- gave a short speech on how the Club has impacted them, and were interviewed on Zoom by a panel of judges from the community.

The judges chose Joshua as the Club's 2021 Youth of the Year. He will compete in the area's Youth of the Year competition against other Boys & Girls Clubs this month and could go on to state, regional and national competitions.

The Ambassadors serve as spokespeople for the Clubs, and receive college scholarships.

2021 Youth of the Year Ambassadors:

Joshua Fernandez, 2021 Youth of the Year
Joshua, a high school junior, has attended the Club since second grade with his twin brother, Joseph. His two older brothers also attended the Club.

When he became a high schooler, he joined the Club's Keystone service program and got a Junior Staff position at the Club. Then, in March 2020, the COVID-19 state lockdowns began, forcing the Club to shut down for two months.

“It ruined my mental health, and I was at the lowest point in my life,” he said. “Every day was the exact same. I became bored with life. I had no motivation, which led me to stop thinking about helping others. There were many nights where I couldn’t sleep and would stare the ceiling thinking about my life and how I didn’t know where it was going, and I just felt helpless.”

Then the Club reopened at the end of May, and Joshua and his brother started working again.

“I was sanitizing the Club, something new that was introduced because of COVID,” he said. “It brought some of my happiness back, because something had finally changed in my life.”

“As kids came back, I was finally able to communicate with people other than my family and it felt good to hear how everyone was doing over the unfortunate times. I was finally digging myself out of the hole that had been dug during the start of quarantine.”

He wants to get a computer science degree from Cal State Long Beach, with the goal of becoming an IT manager.

He wants to use his platform through the Club to advocate for those living in poverty, because he grew up in a family with limited income. He wants to create a foundation that uses gaming streams to raise money for people in poverty.

Nicole Perez, 2021 Ambassador

High school junior Nicole Perez developed her self-confidence at the Club.

Growing up, she didn’t think her opinions mattered and that she needed to choose a career that made a lot of money. When she started attending the Club, she felt welcomed, safe, and that she could be herself.

“During the many college field trips that were provided, I gained a lot of knowledge and ideas on how to pick universities that will be good for my health and my studies,” she said.

She also discovered that she loves to help others, and wants to inspire them to do what they love in spite of their fears.

When she graduates, she wants to major in English or international studies online while studying dance in South Korea.

Joseph Fernandez, 2021 Ambassador

Joseph, a high school junior, has attended the Club since second grade with his twin brother, Joshua.

The Club helped him get out of his comfort zone, making it easier for him to socialize, communicate and work with others. It became his second home, particularly when his home life was difficult.

“The Boys & Girls Club gave me the resources that allowed me to cope with my feelings by allowing me to speak with staff and interact with different people,” he said. “Helping kids get through tough times that they don’t like speaking about, is the main reason I like working at the Boys & Girls Club.”

He became active in the Club's Keystone service program and got a Junior Staff job. He wants to use his platform from those positions and as an Ambassador to raise awareness of those suffering from mental health problems "but are too embarrassed to speak of them with family or friends."

He learned that others had the same struggle as him.

"I told myself, 'I am my hero' and that nobody else was going to help me as much as I could help myself," he said.

Youth of the Year is a national program of Boys & Girls Clubs of America and recognizes high school-age youth who embody the Club's mission to mold productive, caring, responsible citizens. For more information about Youth of the Year, visit <http://www.youthoftheyear.org>

About Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Redlands-Riverside has served the Inland Empire since 1967, and has sites in the communities of Corona, Moreno Valley, Redlands, Rialto, Riverside, San Bernardino and Victorville. Our Clubs serve over 2,000 youth daily in after-school settings, and we offer both winter and summer camps. Our mission is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. For more information, visit www.BeGreatIE.org