



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**EXCEPTIONAL TEEN RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS HONOR; NAMED WASHINGTON STATE MILITARY YOUTH OF THE YEAR BY BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA**

**Ethan Ashford receives \$2,500 college scholarship and will vie for regional title this fall**

Olympia, WA, March 30, 2021 – Ethan Ashford from Hillside Youth Center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord has been named the Washington State Military Youth of the Year by Boys & Girls Clubs of America for his leadership, service, academic excellence and dedication to live a healthy lifestyle. The Youth of the Year title is a prestigious honor bestowed upon an exemplary young person in recognition of leadership, service, academic excellence and dedication to live a healthy lifestyle. Now in its 74th year, the program honors our nation’s most awe-inspiring young people on their path to great futures. As the Washington State Military Youth of the Year, Ethan will serve as an ambassador for all teens in the state, will receive a \$2,500 college scholarship from Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and will go on to contend for the regional Youth of the Year and ultimately the national title.

As a member of the Hillside Youth Center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Ethan has served to support his peers and youth experiencing the unique challenges of military life. As President of the Keystone Club, a teen group dedicated to leadership and community service, Ethan has organized various volunteer activities in the surrounding community. His most passionate work has been as a Junior Staff support for the Passport to Manhood Club, a targeted program to engage young boys in discussions and activities that reinforce character, leadership and positive behavior.

“We are incredibly proud of Ethan and all the Youth of the Year nominees,” said Jim Clark, President and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of America. “Being named Youth of the Year is a lifelong honor. As the Washington State Military Youth of the Year, Ethan will serve as a spokesperson for Boys & Girls Club kids and teens across the state who face the many unique challenges associated with military life.”

Founded in 1947 as Boys & Girls Clubs of America’s premier youth recognition program, Youth of the Year recognizes outstanding contributions to a member’s family, school, community and Boys & Girls Club. The Youth of the Year program is supported by Toyota and Mondelēz. As the Signature Sponsor of Youth of the Year, Toyota is committed to partnering with Boys & Girls Clubs of America to ensure local

Clubs provide life-enhancing opportunities for kids and teens to explore, develop and apply the essential skills they need to be successful in life and work. As the Lead Sponsor of Youth of the Year, Mondelēz International, will engage with local Clubs year-round to help foster a new generation of leaders prepared to live in and lead a diverse global economy. Youth of the Year representatives are the workforce leaders, innovators and problem-solvers of tomorrow.

This fall, Ethan will compete for the title of Pacific Region Military Youth of the Year and an additional \$20,000 college scholarship. Five regional winners will advance to the virtual National Youth of the Year event in October 2021 to compete for the title of National Military Youth of the Year. The final stage of the journey, National Youth of the Year, presents the opportunity to receive an additional scholarship of \$50,000 and a brand-new Toyota Corolla.

For more information about the Youth of the Year program, visit [www.youthoftheyear.org](http://www.youthoftheyear.org).

#### **About Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State Association and Alliance**

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington exist to inspire & enable all young people to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens. It focuses on five core program areas: character and leadership development, education and career development, health and life skills, the arts and sports/fitness/recreation. Currently, over 76,000 Washington state youth in grades K-12 are served through annual membership and over 53,000 youth through community outreach. There are programs currently offered at 152 separate locations, including traditional Clubhouses, military installations, native lands, public housing, schools and community centers.

#### **About Boys & Girls Clubs of America**

For more than 100 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, more than 4,600 Clubs serve over 4.7 6 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 BGCA-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 Harris Survey of alumni, 54 percent said the Club saved their lives. National headquarters are located in Atlanta. Learn more about Boys & Girls Clubs of America on Facebook and Twitter.

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