



## Department of Human Services

### **N.J. Human Services Awards Teens for Creativity in Celebrating Support from Parents or Loved Ones**

*State Recognizes Winners for the 2019 New Jersey Teen Media Contest*

**May 15, 2019**

(TRENTON) – The New Jersey Department of Human Services today honored 16 New Jersey high school and middle school students for their winning entries in the 2019 New Jersey Child Support Teen Media Contest, which celebrated the artistic and written portrayal of situations when the students felt most supported by a parent or loved one.

The contest aims to engage high school and middle school students in creative thinking through art, digital illustration and the written word. Teens can enter the contest individually or through their school. Winners are chosen based upon their interpretation of the year's theme, with the winning art and written pieces featured in Human Services' annual Child Support calendar published each year.

Winners and honorable mentions can be viewed at [www.NJTeenMedia.org](http://www.NJTeenMedia.org).

"We are once again excited by the amazing talents of New Jersey's students," Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson said. "I congratulate the winners and all who participated. The entries covered the spectrum of what it means to be supported by a parent or loved one and the importance that support plays in building strong families."

"I thank everyone who participated for helping shine a spotlight on what it means to support children and the impact that support has on their lives," said Human Services Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira. "This is a great opportunity to highlight the outstanding abilities of New Jersey's young people while also bringing attention to the importance of young people having a strong support system."

“This contest is one of the ways that we bring attention to New Jersey’s child support program,” said Natasha Johnson, director of Human Service’s Division of Family Development, which hosts the contest annually. “By giving young people a family-related theme around which to build their art, we are encouraging them to think about their support system and the important role parents and loved ones play in their lives.”

**Winners in the Hand-Drawn/Hand-Painted category for *middle schools*:**

- First place, Esperanza Baquedano, Emerson Middle School (Union City)
- Second place, Lois Kim, Cliffside Park Middle School
- Third place, Jolie Wong, Academy 1 Middle School (Jersey City)

**Winners in the Hand-Drawn/Hand-Painted category for *high schools*:**

- First place, Darielle Moore, Piscataway High School
- Second place, Mackenzie Jack, Hackettstown High School
- Third place, Niaymah Trent, Cliffside Park High School

**Winners in the Digital Artwork category:**

- First place, Alyssa Morris, Hunterdon County Polytech
- Second place – TIE
  - Jenna Clayton, Wall High School
  - Benjamin Fernandez, Newmark High School (Scotch Plains)
- Third place, Wellington Ochoa, Cliffside Park High School

**Winners in the Written Work category for *middle schools*:**

- First place, Blake Cregg-Wedmore, Hazlet Middle School
- Second place, Gabbriella Sebestyen, Thompson Middle School (Middletown)
- Third place, Zayn Jaber, Pillars Preparatory Academy (South River)

**Winners in the Written Work category for *high schools*:**

- First place, Akansha Joshi, West Windsor Plainsboro High School South
- Second place, Erin Hanlon, Ocean City High School
- Third place, Elijah Cochran, Ocean City High School

Besides having their artwork featured in the 2020 calendar, all winning entries, along with a number of honorable mentions, will be displayed in the Statehouse Annex Tunnel from June 3-7.

For more information about this program or the New Jersey Office of Child Support Services, please call **1-877-NJKIDS1** or go to [www.njchildsupport.org](http://www.njchildsupport.org).