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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NEW JERSEY HEALTH INITIATIVES AWARDS \$200,000 GRANT
TO BUILD NEXT GENERATION COMMUNITY LEADERS AMONG PERTH AMBOY YOUTH**
Jewish Renaissance Foundation to Facilitate Local Program over the Next Three Years

[PERTH AMBOY, NJ] – July 26, 2017- New Jersey Health Initiatives (NJHI), the statewide grantmaking program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has recently announced its latest round of grants dedicated to building a Culture of Health. The Jewish Renaissance Foundation (JRF) has been awarded \$200,000 for its project entitled “Emerging Leaders for a Healthier Community.”

The Emerging Leaders for a Healthier Community (ELHC) project aims to provide youth from the City of Perth Amboy with an opportunity to gain leadership skills while serving in a capacity to aid key community stakeholders by developing an action plan to improve the City of Perth Amboy’s overall health. The strategy will incorporate a community-based, multi-agency approach to implement a service-learning curriculum to participating youth under the NJHI-funded initiative. “JRF’s vision is for a community where youth will be an integral part of the city-wide strategic plan in building a Culture of Health,” stated Alexandra Cross, JRF’s Chief Executive Officer. “We are honored to receive this grant award and to work together with our youth and New Jersey Health Initiatives to build a Culture of Health in Perth Amboy.”

The ELHC project will recruit high-school aged Perth Amboy residents from various youth development programs such as JRF’s School-Based Youth Services, Student Training and Enrichment Program for Urban Progress (STEP UP), Academy for Education Institute, the City of Perth Amboy Municipal Youth Alliance, and the Perth Amboy Adult and Continuing Education Center.

Each month students will participate in a service-learning institute intended to coach youth on population health and civic engagement. Emerging Leaders will receive training and support from key stakeholders in Perth Amboy and their partners, including, the City of Perth Amboy, Raritan Bay YMCA, Montclair State University, Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services (CREEHS), Middlesex County College (Perth Amboy Campus) and neighborhood revitalization programs such as the JRF’s Perth Amboy Alliance for Community (PAAC) and the Gateway Neighborhood Collaborative (GNC) with the Perth Amboy Redevelopment Team for Neighborhood Enterprise and Revitalization (P.A.R.T.N.E.R.).

Through this initiative, and with guidance and support from ELHC coaches and committed partners, the youth participants will create action plans to address the state of health in their community. ELHC



youth will present their plans and define their implementation publicly in the spring of 2018 to the Perth Amboy City Council and members of Healthier Perth Amboy, the NJHI-supported community coalition. They will receive compensation to implement their action plans in the summer of 2018. The NJHI grant will support the direct expenses that are essential to the ELHC Institute.

Through *NJHI: Next Generation Community Leaders*, 10 grants of \$200,000 each have been awarded to organizations over three years to develop youth participants' civic engagement skills, provide them meaningful summer employment, and guide their civic engagement and participation in an alumni network that will be the foundation for their future leadership endeavors.

"This work will enable young people to acquire a sophisticated understanding of the barriers to health they see impacting their families, friends and neighbors, and provide the resources to affect meaningful, sustainable, change both now and in the future," said Bob Atkins, PhD, RN, FAAN, director of NJHI. "Youth are an underutilized asset, and we can't build healthier communities without them. While we can't predict how many future mayors, school board members, Little League presidents or Chamber of Commerce presidents will emerge from this group, I look forward to seeing the solutions they design, and also watching them mature as community leaders."

Periodic updates about Perth Amboy youth teams' progress will be available on JRF's [project page](#) on the NJHI website – www.njhi.org.

To learn more about the *NJHI: Next Generation Community Leaders* initiative, visit njhi.org and participate in the conversation online with the hashtag [#NJLeaders2030](#). In 2030, the youth participating in *NJHI: Next Generation Community Leaders* will be 29-31 years old, poised to expand their impact as effective leaders, and one election cycle away from meeting the minimum age requirement for a U.S. presidential bid.

About the Jewish Renaissance Foundation (JRF)

The Jewish Renaissance Foundation was established in 1995 as a faith-based, nonprofit corporation with central offices located at The Proprietary House, 149 Kearny Avenue in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. As a Community Action Agency, we strive to overcome poverty and hopelessness throughout Middlesex County East; an area that encompasses the cities of Carteret, Edison, Highland Park, Metuchen, Perth Amboy, Sayreville, South Amboy and Woodbridge. We believe in changing lives by creating hope and self-sufficiency, and we succeed by providing individuals, children and families with essential health and human services, community development and youth programs. Visit us at www.jrfnj.org. Follow us at Facebook and Twitter @OnePPLOneHeart



About New Jersey Health Initiatives

New Jersey Health Initiatives is the statewide grantmaking program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Established in 1987 in honor of the New Jersey philanthropic legacy of RWJF's founder, Robert Wood Johnson, NJHI supports innovations and drives conversations to build healthier communities through grantmaking across the State of New Jersey. To meet the many health needs of our state's diverse populations, regions and communities, the NJHI program encourages collaboration across sectors to foster deep relationships committed to long-term change affording all New Jerseyans the opportunity to live the healthiest life possible. Learn more about NJHI at njhi.org, and follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/NJHI or on Facebook at facebook.com/newjerseyhealthinitiatives.

About Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 40 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.

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