



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF ANNAPOLIS &
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY**

November 17, 2020

Dear Family & Friends,



When I reflect on the past year at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Annapolis & Anne Arundel County, it's easy for me to reminisce about our organization before the pandemic. A time when laughter filled our Clubhouses and members interacted mask-free. We've always strived to be a place where our members can be carefree, energetic, and happy; a safe, fun place where they can learn, develop, and grow.

But our world has become complicated. New information and challenges are emerging every day that threaten the health, safety, and routine of our community. By pivoting our model and expanding our services, we have worked diligently to meet the needs of our local youth and community throughout the phases of the pandemic.

Because of you, we had the support we needed to face these challenges head-on and serve the kids and families who need us most. But we still have more work to do, and I need your help to do it.

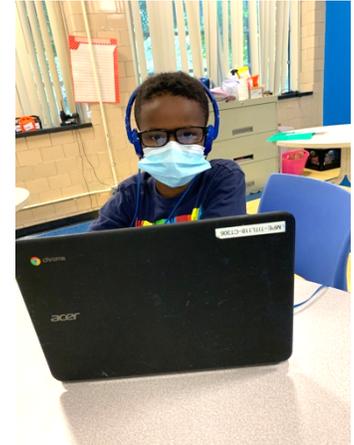
As businesses closed, jobs were cut, and schools shifted to a virtual platform, the need in our community grew ten-fold. Many families were forced to make difficult decisions that either significantly cut their household income or left kids unsupervised and alone at home. Already struggling parents either lost their jobs or their childcare – some losing both. Basic needs, such as food and household items, were increasingly harder to afford, and the education disparity seemed to double overnight as kids struggled to stay connected without sufficient technology or internet access.

With more and more people facing hardship and adversity, we knew our standard model was not a feasible option to help our struggling community. So, we adapted.

Following Clubhouse closures, we created a virtual club, providing online programming that allowed our members to stay connected and see familiar faces. We distributed weekly *Club-on-the-Go Bags*, filled with breakfast items, snacks, activities, and resources to engage and feed our members from afar. We regularly sent out parent e-newsletters with additional activities and resources to keep parents informed. We organized pop-up pantries with free grocery items and

household supplies for families to pick-up. When it was safe, we opened for a modified, six-week long summer camp, offering breakfast and lunch and target programming to address summer learning loss. To reach even more youth, we started *Club-on-the-Corner*, a mobile, small-group, outdoors enrichment program delivered to communities by our trained youth development professionals. Every step of the way, BGCAA has done whatever it takes to help our local kids and their families get back on their feet.

We are excited to once again be back in our Clubhouses, serving youth and hearing their voices fill our halls. But the Club Experience looks different now. Instead of serving our members after school, our Clubhouses are open from 8:00am-5:00pm. Members have secure, constant access to wi-fi and real time support as they navigate e-learning. They receive breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks during their time at the Club, as well as the exercise and breaks they need throughout the day via staff-led recreational activities. With safety as our #1 priority, our Clubhouses are offering essential resources every day to help our members succeed and give their families an opportunity to rebuild.



To ensure we can continue offering these critical services, I need your support. Said best by Magic Johnson, “All kids need is a little help, a little hope, and someone who believes in them.” In a time of such uncertainty and crisis, YOU have the capacity to impact and shape the great futures of our community’s youth.



BGCAA is dedicated to offering affordable programs so our most vulnerable families can easily access our services. Did you know our membership fees are just \$25 for the entire school year? Yet, the approximate annual cost per member is \$2500 – an increase from previous years.

With the expansion of our services and hours, we required additional highly-trained staff to oversee our members, an abundance of PPE and cleaning supplies to maintain our rigorous safety protocol, and new items, such as furniture and individual program materials, to ensure kids are properly spaced and receiving the support they need throughout the day. It’s your financial support that allows us to keep fees low for families and provide a safe haven and quality programs for the youth who need it most.

Together, we can give members and their families the opportunity they need to get back on their feet and thrive.

Though our Clubs look different, our mission remains the same: *to inspire and enable all youth, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.* We understand that each kid is different, and never take a single approach to helping them succeed. Our goal is to give our community's youth the confidence and support they need to find their passions and excel beyond our Clubhouse doors.

I've seen, firsthand, the impact our Clubs can have on our youth because our staff is filled with former Club kids. For instance, Demontae Reid is currently the Club Director at Freetown Village, but he started his journey with BGCAA at 6 years old. He recounts his first experience at the club as a welcoming one.

"I liked being a Club member because I always felt like I could be myself. I felt welcomed at Freetown Village from an early age and never experienced discrimination."

While Demontae describes his home life as loving and supportive - "a strong foundation to build upon" - he attributes his leadership skills and aspirations to his Club experience. Highlighting Club programs like Money Matters and Passport to Manhood, he's grateful he learned how to manage his finances, build his self-esteem, and find his confidence as a leader at an early age. He also jumped head-first into our community service programs, finding every opportunity to contribute to people in need in our community. Demontae's giving spirit, ambition, and drive won him a month-long study abroad trip to Scotland's Gordonstoun International Summer School. This opportunity allowed him to experience different cultures, work with other like-minded teens, and try new activities not offered in his school system, like crossbow.

With such a positive Club Experience, Demontae felt inspired to pursue a career at Freetown Village. Starting in the Junior Staff position, he quickly worked his way up to the Youth Development Professional role. Soon after, the Club Director position at Freetown became available, and we knew he was the best candidate to fill the role. Demontae has not only become the face of that Clubhouse, making members feel welcome and supported, but he is a true role model throughout the community.



“I want to help the youth of our community reach their goals by pushing them to achieve greatness and providing positive encouragement. They should know that it doesn’t matter where you come from, but where you are going. Anything is possible.”

It’s stories and dedication like Demontae’s that inspire all of us at BGCAA. Every day, we see the positive impact the Clubs have on our member’s lives. Despite the current challenges, we are more determined than ever to help youth get back on track to their great future. We remain focused on doing whatever it takes to ensure our members and their families have the resources and support they need during this pandemic and beyond.

Our world may be complicated, but the decision to help our kids is simple.

Your generosity allows us to help our community’s most vulnerable youth. Thank you for continually believing in us and giving so many kids in our community the opportunity to succeed. You have my deepest gratitude.

Graciously,



Lisa Lindsay-Mondoro

CEO

Boys & Girls Clubs of Annapolis & Anne Arundel County

P.S. We cannot do this without **YOU** and appreciate your support as we continue serving the kids who need us most.

Donations can be made online at: <https://donorbox.org/annualcampaign-2>
Checks can be mailed to: BGCAA • 121 South Villa Avenue • Annapolis, MD 21401
United Way of Central Maryland: #144 • Maryland Charity Campaign: #52-1736346
www.BGCAA.org • 410-263-2542 • info@bgcaa.com