



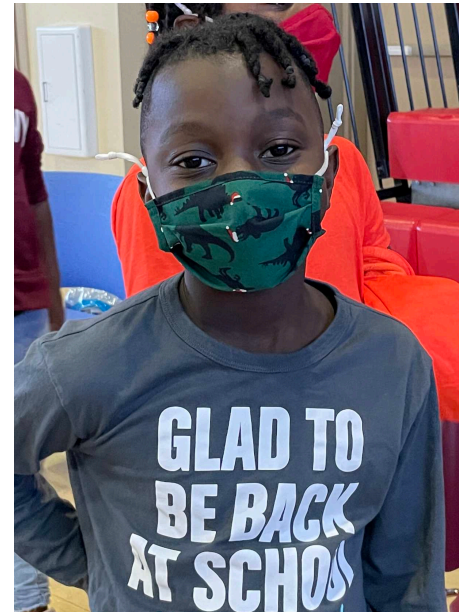
BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF ANNAPOLIS &
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

November 2, 2021

Dear Family & Friends,

Do you remember when our community shut down? I was sitting in my office at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Annapolis & Anne Arundel County notifying parents of closures, making plans for my staff, and thinking to myself, “this is going to be a long two weeks.” Can you believe that was the original projection? I can’t help but reflect on that moment and think, “we really had no idea.”

As two weeks has turned into nearly two years, I am still stunned by what we’ve experienced as a community. From closures and confinement to hybrid learning and then a return to in-person, this pandemic has presented more challenges and changes than we could have ever imagined. As the CEO of BGCAA, it’s been difficult witnessing the burden these changes have put on our members and their families but also inspiring to see how our organization and team do whatever it takes to meet the growing needs of our community.



We know it wouldn’t have been possible without you. Your support gave us the resources we needed to face each challenge head-on. However, our work is just getting started, and I still need your help.

Child psychologist, Haim Ginott, said, “Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression.” The pandemic will have lasting effects on all of us but will especially impact our youth. We are already seeing the fall-out of a year spent at home, as kids struggle to reacclimate to in-person education, social interactions, and a set routine. This crisis put our youth’s academic and emotional development on pause, and our community is struggling to get back on track as we find a new sense of normalcy.

With so many falling behind, we’re at a crossroads. How we proceed now and what we do to address the growing disparities among our kids and teens will determine their future success.

During the pandemic, BGCAA frequently pivoted to tackle the growing needs in our community. After the shutdown, we recorded virtual programming, distributed weekly bags full of activities and resources, and organized pop-up pantries with groceries, hygiene products, and PPE supplies to provide relief to families. When schools went to an e-learning platform, we opened our Clubhouses from 8:00am-5:00pm with reliable wi-fi, real-time support from staff, three meals a day, and a safe place for our kids to be kids again. When the summer arrived, we offered free summer camp for the first time, giving kids access to programs without putting a financial burden on

our members' families. One of those programs, Summer Brain Gain, is specifically designed to address summer learning loss. Now that we are well into the fall, our Clubhouses have returned to our traditional model, serving local youth after school from 2:00-7:00pm and during school breaks. With each step, we evaluated the needs of community to provide a high-quality Club Experience, maintaining safety as our #1 priority.



As we continue to serve our members, a light has been shed on an alarming trend: the psychological effects caused by this pandemic. Isolation, lack of routine, increased stress and responsibility, and decreased resources in many households have had a traumatic impact on our kids and teens. We're hearing of more altercations between kids and their peers, more teens getting jobs to support their families, and even more struggling to improve academically. Our members are distracted or encumbered by their home lives, school lives, and personal lives. As a result, our Club Experience is putting more emphasis on Trauma-Informed Care, ensuring all staff are trained to support the growing mental health needs of our members. Through this training, our staff will be able to better identify youth experiencing trauma, learn best practices for communicating, and have the knowledge to connect members and their families to the tools and resources that address their needs.

Already, we've seen the positive impact trauma-informed care can have on our members. One instance comes to mind when our Clubs opened as learning support centers. As the weather got colder, staff noticed three siblings were coming to the Club without gloves and coats. By creating a safe space, building trust, and having a strong connection with the members, they eventually felt comfortable telling staff they were homeless. Immediately, staff jumped into action, connecting the family with community partners to provide additional help, including food, personal hygiene and cleaning products, and, the much needed, new winter gear for the kids.

In order to continue offering critical services like this, I need your support.

BGCAA's dedication to offering affordable out of school care so our most vulnerable families can easily access our Clubs is steadfast. While our membership fees are just \$25 for the entire school year, the approximate annual cost per member is \$2600. It's your financial support that allows us to keep fees low for families and provide a safe, fun, stable environment for youth. **YOU** have the capacity to make a difference in the lives of the kids and teens who need us most.

Together, we can give members the support they need to rebuild and create a plan for their great future.



While our six Clubhouses have adapted to meet the needs of our community, our mission has remained the same: *to inspire and enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.* We know we cannot take a single

approach in helping youth succeed because every child is different. Through programs in Academic Success, Good Character & Leadership, and Healthy Lifestyles, we are able to identify the biggest needs of each member and give them the tools to thrive.

I have witnessed, firsthand, the impact our Clubs, programs, and dedicated staff can have on our members, especially in the past year. One example is Aaron. Aaron's mom reached out to BGCAA to register him for summer camp but was concerned about sending him because he had a speech delay. She was not only worried about bullying but didn't know if our programs would be a good fit knowing he had trouble communicating. Our Club Director assured her Aaron would be safe and welcomed by his peers. Aaron had a blast at summer camp. Not only did he make new friends and have fun, but he was exposed to our evidence-based programs, like Summer Brain Gain and Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.), that helped him develop his communication skills. Staff also carved out time to practice forming and pronouncing new words, always patient when he struggled to express himself. By the end of camp, Aaron's speaking skills had drastically improved. Aaron's mom ended up registering him as a school year member because, despite the long drive from their house to the Club, she said his experience had made such a positive impact on his life. Aaron still loves coming to the Club, and his speech continues to improve every day.

Another example is Adrian. When Adrian started at the Club, he had a hard time focusing and making connections with other members. For much of COVID, he was isolated with little to no interactions with his peers and wasn't sure how to approach other kids to create friendships. He expressed his sadness and frustration to a staff member he trusted and asked for advice. Through conversation and mediation, Adrian was given the help, tools, and environment to form meaningful relationships at the Club. Now, he is the life of the party. Outgoing and eager to join, Adrian no longer struggles to connect.

Without a great today, a great future will be out of reach for many of our local youth. It is through the Club experience that kids, like Aaron and Adrian, can begin to get back on track.

After another tough year, BGCAA is committed to providing a great today for as many kids and teens as possible. What we have found, unfortunately, is that many youths and their families are unable to reach our Clubs. Unlike Aaron's mom who has the capacity to drive him here, many families do not have that option due to lack of transportation, single-parent households, or conflicting work schedules. As the need grew bigger and bigger during the pandemic, we knew we needed to expand past our Clubhouse doors.



As a result, Club-on-the-Go was established. This mobile program brings engaging, hands-on activities straight to youth via BGCAA mini-buses. In partnership with local schools and community centers, we provide access to programs, food and other household essentials, school supplies, and social interaction. Our caring, trauma-informed staff offer the same Club Experience and support to youth right outside their front door. This summer, we served 228 new members at three locations: Tyler Heights Elementary, Eastport Elementary, and Germantown Elementary. This mobile Club continues to grow and reach more and more kids and teens all over Maryland, giving them a safe outlet to learn and have fun. We are committed to reaching as many kids as possible, so they have the same opportunity to achieve their great futures.



When we said we would do whatever it takes to help local youth, we meant it.

Your generosity allows us to continue doing whatever it takes for the kids and teens who need us most. 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. When kids have Clubs, and Clubs have **YOU**, tough times can lead to great moments. Your support makes a huge difference in the lives of local youth!

Donate online at: <https://donorbox.org/annualcampaign>
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