



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF MERCER COUNTY

2020-2021 Program Update Report

Summary: To say that the last year was a challenging year is an understatement. We started the 2020 - 21 year with a full-day in-person summer camp program for 175/day and then continued the full-day program into the school year to accommodate working parents.

Each location had various pods of youth based on each school's varying out-of-school and hybrid school schedules of our members. We also began year two of implementing our focused program initiatives - Reading for Success (RFS) and Social-Emotional Learning. We strictly followed the CDC's guidelines for Covid safety. That included an increase in spending for PPE, facility sanitation, staff for health screening, a reduction in the number of our members due to social distancing, and transportation rules that reduced access to teens and other hard to serve youth.

Detailed Report: When COVID-19 hit, we were required to stop operations on March 13, 2020. Our staff quickly pivoted to remote learning opportunities and cascaded out resource information to families. We decided not to open a curbside food pick-up since several organizations provided this service to the community. Additionally, we felt it was more important to inform our families of these resources than to dilute the effort by offering a similar program.

Besides focusing on remote/distance learning, we focused on reopening as soon as possible. This involved:

- Participating in many best practice workshops/seminars on:
 - Safety & Cleaning
 - Anticipated program guidelines for social distancing
 - HR policies
 - Virtual Programming
- Raising additional funds for expanded services, more staff, and new supplies/equipment.
- Developing new policies and procedures to ensure we opened safely for staff and our youth
- Revising our summer program design so that the curriculum could work in the new reality.

On June 22, 2020, we reopened the Club for summer programming. We served 175 community youth. Our reopening was significant for three key reasons:

- Most of our parents work at jobs that they need to show up to be paid, and therefore child care was essential to their ability to work. Most summer camp programs did not open this summer.
- With school being out, most of our youth now needed a source of food for the summer. Attending camp ensured students of breakfast, lunch, and snacks each day.



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- Most of our students struggled with distance learning and thus fell further behind in their schooling. Our summer camp program featured 2 hours per day of supplemental educational support, along with many enrichment learning opportunities.

With the start of the new school year on or around September 8, 2020, and each of the public and charter schools implementing different versions of in-person and virtual learning, our programs were open from 7:45 am to 5:30 pm to:

- Support working parents
- Provide lunch, snack, and dinner for youth
- Provide virtual school support, supplemental education, and enrichment activities.

Of course, increasing our hours of operation from the traditional after school program of 15-17 hours per week to 50 hours per week, along with additional staffing and supply needs, we are relying more than ever on our Club supporters to help us serve youth who need us the most.

After-School

Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, more than 200 youth members participated in our after-school program at two locations. We provided full-day care Monday through Friday from 7:45 am to 5:30 pm. Our pivot from a traditional after-school program to a full-day program enabled many parents to go to work knowing that their kids were in a safe and enriching environment. Students were engaged in fun educational programs to support their schoolwork. Staff supported youth by logging them into their virtual school day, helping with activities, and communicating with teachers to facilitate student engagement/learning. This assistance required a significant upgrade in the Club's internet capacity. Comcast enabled us to accomplish this task in the fall of 2020.

The Club provided lunch & snacks for all of our after-school youth. Each day we served a hot lunch, and snacks including items such as granola bars, Sun Chips, breakfast bars, crackers, fruit, water, and juice. All food provided must meet the NJ Department of Agriculture's nutritional requirements. Each week we serve about **2,000 meals/snacks**. We have also partnered with local restaurants to offer take-home family meals a couple of nights per week. A win, win for everyone.

Remote learning continues to be a challenge: The word challenge is an understatement. Remote and hybrid learning is not easy. It's been reported that only 50% of Trenton middle and high school students log in to school each day. Our students are lucky. They can go to school virtually from the Club and do their work. Our staff engages them throughout the day, helps them log on, answers questions, and tutors them in pull-out groups. We also implemented a learning management system called Schoology. Schoology enables students to access Club online programming and over



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200 learning partners 24/7. We are using Schoology so students can access Lexia, our reading and language arts software. Lexia enables us to track usage on a daily/weekly basis and generate reports. Lexia is also helpful for youth on days they don't attend the Club.

High School Teens

Transportation was a challenge for us. Beginning in September 2020, we were unable to bus teens from Ewing, Lawrence, and Trenton High Schools Monday through Friday at school dismissal to our Spruce Street Clubhouse for our social, recreational, and educational drop-in programs due to CDC guidelines. As a result, we delayed the opening of our Teen programs until November. We had a significantly lower number of teens participate than in pre-Covid times, with just 10-15 teens attending daily. In January 2021, transportation resumed on a 50% bus capacity, and the number of teens participating increased. To get the teens to the Club, we had to drive all through the city to pick up our teens because schools were on a virtual schedule. We were averaging 15 – 20 teens a day. Although fewer teens participated, we successfully ran our Keystone Club, Career Launch & Work Experience program, College Access, Career & Job Fair, and Youth of the Year program live and or online. This spring, we are averaging 25 teens/day and growing. We plan on being back at full capacity in the fall when the area schools go back 100% in person. Every teen has access to a healthy snack each day and dinner each night.

The Club is pleased to report that even during COVID, on average, 95% of Club seniors graduated from high school each year, 80% were accepted into college, 8% into Technical School, 4% into jobs, and 3% into military service for an overall 95% postsecondary career pathway placement. We awarded 22 seniors with college access scholarships in June.

Triple Play: A Game Plan for the Mind, Body and Soul program

The Boys & Girls Clubs continues to offer Triple Play, an evidence-based program developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, which encourages participants to Eat Right, Move Right & Live Right. Club members participate daily in some physical fitness activities, which was a challenge due to COVID. Activities included go noodle, jump roping, running outside, shooting basketball, kicking a soccer ball, stretching, and walking around the facility. Healthy cooking classes occur weekly as well and focus on preparing healthy foods. We introduce our youth to many new foods that they may have never tried and provide "teach-back" lessons that they can take home to share with their families to help impact the whole family's food choices.

Community Garden and Outdoor Education Center

Last summer, our Community Garden and Outdoor Education Center was a crucial part of our summer camp program experience. Students grew vegetables and picked them each week to use in our cooking program at camp. Besides having a place for city youth to be outside on nice days, the outdoor education center provides extra classroom



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space for the Club. This outdoor space was also critical this fall and spring as a place where student could get outside and move around.

Summer Camp

The state has eased most restrictions for camp operations this summer. We are currently at about 250 youth/day, above last year levels (175), and hoping to reach our service level goal of 350 youth/day. If registration trends follow previous year patters we should reach this goal. Of course this is not a normal year. You'll see lots of posting on our FB pages, and all information is on our websites to encouraged registrations <https://www.bgcmercer.org/summer-camp> There is still a lot of COVID hesitancy in the community.

New for 2021 - 2022

Fall After School

The Club is planning to re-open our two after school sites at Gregory & Rivera Schools, plus open (3) new after school sites at the Mott, Parker & Grant schools in Trenton to help students recover from learning loss due to the effects COVID has had on students' education for the past 18 months, providing childcare for working families, and providing overall youth development activities. Our goal is to raise \$150,000 in private operating fund to match with governmental and parent co-pays to enable us to open these new after school sites in September 2021 to serve 100 youth at each site 3 hours a day, five day per week from September 4, 2021 to June 24, 2022. Raising these funds would enable us to leverage another \$300,000 in funding. Exceeding our 150K fundraising goal would enable us to serve more youth, and/or provide tutoring/specialty programming. Additional funding would need to be secured to offer a summer program.

We are looking at ways to better coordinate services within Trenton schools this fall by working with Mercer Street Friends to form a Community In Schools Stakeholder Group. This group had their first meeting on May 26th with 20 partners in attendance. New Jersey CIS, Bingham SUNNY, and the Nettle Center at U of Penn are working with us for creating long lasting partnerships with area colleges to support the CIS model.

Social Emotional Learning

We've created a Mental Health task force to help connect parents and youth to local mental health services for those youth who have been identified through our SEL as having low SEL aptitudes. This past year we saw a 100% increase in students having low SEL aptitudes due to the effect of the pandemic. While students SEL aptitudes improved through participation in our ASP this year, we anticipate on-going needs, plus all the new students who were isolated at home this past year returning in September. We currently have (7) mental health providers which are helping us. We are also working with the Trenton Health team with their NowPow program, which enables Trenton non-profits to search and connect with other service providers.



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New Technology Resources

Besides Comcast upgrading our wireless connections through out two facilities, we installed (3) Zoom Studio's at Spruce St in June 2021 to help with classroom instruction. We seeking funding to support expanding Zoom Studio's at Centre Street & our school locations for this September 2021. We are also working with local funders to install a Video and Music production studios for teens at our Spruce Street Community Center. Our biggest technology upgrade was integrating Schoology our Learning Management System (LMS) within the organization. While initially just a means for us to deliver remote programming, it has now become the center piece of both in-person and remote programming. It is also enabling us to expand and enhance staff training.

Joint Curriculum & Training Partnership

We recently signed an agreement with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Monmouth, Paterson & Atlantic City to employee Zoubir Yazid, as our Chief Learning Officer for all four Clubs. Under the direction and leadership of our Club, all 4 clubs will develop uniformed curriculums and staff trainings which will allow the organizations to maximize knowledge & expertise to provide the highest level of quality programming among the Clubs. The curriculum and trainings are being share through Schoology. Curriculum teams for each organization has already met to agree on curriculums and training for the fall program session. This summer this team will develop and load curriculums/trainings onto Schoology for launching the project in September. If successful, access to the curriculums/trainings will be offered to other Clubs in NJ, Northeast and then nationwide beginning in 2022 for a subscription rate. These subscription rates will help share the cost of the project making it affordable and sustainable for all Club.

Endowment Efforts.

In February 2019 the Club launched a 20 million, 20 year effort to build our endowment to help ensure the legacy of the Club for future generations of Trenton area youth.

We initiated several strategies to accomplish this goal:

- Forming a Foundation to be the home of our endowment, but to also hold events/membership to raise funds and build awareness of our efforts
- Create a Planned Giving and Legacy Society to encourage community stakeholders to make estate gifts to the Club. <https://www.bgcmercer.org/legacy-society>
- Formation of Honorary Trustees who are committed to the Club, connect the Club to resources, raise funds for the Club, but have less meetings/commitments than traditional Board members. We currently have 9 Trustees towards our goal of 20. Having more connected stakeholders increases our ability to raise the resources needed for the organization.

To date we have raised just under 2 million dollars towards our goal, and see the momentum building from our efforts.



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Strategic Planning

In 2021-2022 we will be forming a Strategic Planning Committee, composed of Board members, staff and community stakeholders to assist us in developing our next strategic plan. This plan will be presented to the Board at our July 2022 Board Retreat. Please contact us if you are interested in serving on this Committee.





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