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Boys & Girls Clubs of Lodi & Hackensack
460 Passaic Avenue
Lodi, NJ 07644
973-473-7410

PRESS RELEASE

Boys & Girls Clubs of Lodi & Hackensack is Making an Impact During Covid-19

During this time of uncertainty, one thing we know for certain, is that our commitment to impact the children in our communities is stronger than ever before. While our methods of impact have changed over the last several months, our mission to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens, has not and will not waiver.

On March 13, 2020, Covid-19 forced the closure of our Clubs. With the closure of our clubhouses came the loss of our largest revenue streams from the cancelation of our daily bingo fundraisers, pool and facility rentals, and special event fundraisers, but most importantly, the daily programming for the children and teens we impact was also put on hold.

The Boys & Girls Clubs do whatever it takes to impact the children who need us most, and with that, developed enriching virtual programming, which was made available to all members and non-members, within two weeks of our Clubs' closures. Virtual programming included STEM activities, Art projects, virtual mentoring sessions and homework help, Dance lessons, and so much more.

In late June, the decision was made to not open for traditional Summer Camp. And so, program staff both from our Lodi & Hackensack Clubhouses, as well as from our LEAP 21st Century Community Learning Centers program at Thomas Jefferson Middle School in Lodi, began developing exciting virtual programming to conduct throughout the summer. We also felt that we needed to address an overwhelming concern that many of our kids may not have access to healthy foods during the summer. Last year, we provided over 76,000 healthy meals to hungry children at our Clubs, and Club closures kept us from doing so since March. In partnership with the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, we kicked off our **Free Summer Grab & Go Meals** program this week, which enables children to pick up to-go packaged breakfasts and lunches at our Clubhouses, throughout the week. This program will run through August 28th, and is open to any child in need, not just Club members

Also this week, we launched our **Summer Pop-up programming**, which takes place completely outside, both our Lodi and Hackensack Clubs, and provides members the opportunity to get together, with masks and safety protocols in place, and participate in activities in STEM, Dance, Art, Recreation, and more, for two hours per day, twice per week. This will work in unison with virtual programming which is also being provided daily.

Finally, our LEAP program is kicking-off their inaugural summer camp virtually, which provided all participants with the many supplies they will need, starting with brand new Chromebooks, so each child can access the virtual programming from home. While the new Chromebooks are on loan to each student, other supplies provided, which include Baking kits, Art supplies, Design kits, Gym supplies, STEM Kits and more, are theirs to keep once programming concludes. The LEAP program launched in September 2020 and is funded by a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. Throughout the school year, LEAP students have participated in creative and fun programming and clubs, such as Cooking, Bucket Drumming, Sewing, STEM, and more.

The safety of the children, our staff, and volunteers, remains our first priority, and while it was a truly difficult decision to not open for traditional Summer Camp, , we remain committed to providing opportunities, experiences and Great Futures, to the youth in our communities. We very much look forward to reopening our clubs and welcoming the children back. You can help us pick up where we left off when the Clubs finally reopen, by donating to our Fund the Future Campaign. To donate visit www.bgcoflodi.org/donate-now. For more information on ways to support or get involved with our Clubs, contact Melissa McKinney at 973-473-7410 ext. 104.