



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

METRO DENVER

Fall Newsletter
2017



Helping Kids. Building Communities.



“OUR TOP GOALS ARE THAT COLORADO YOUTH ARE HEALTHY AND READY FOR CAREERS.”

GOVERNOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER, reflects on his involvement with Boys & Girls Clubs and encourages the development of young people in Colorado.



“BE KIND, WORK HARD AND NEVER QUIT. THESE ARE GOOD LESSONS FOR EVERYONE AND ONES I’VE TRIED TO LIVE BY.”

GOVERNOR HICKENLOOPER

As he approaches the last year of his final term as Governor of Colorado, Governor John Hickenlooper took a few minutes out of his busy schedule to reflect on Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver’s work, the future of Colorado’s youth and how citizens can encourage and support our community’s next generation of leaders.

What are your top goals for youth in Colorado?

Our top goals are that Colorado youth are healthy and ready for careers.

We want to encourage them to put down their technology and get outside. We’re working on a great initiative called Colorado the Beautiful where, within a generation, every Coloradan will live within 10 minutes of a park, trail or green space.

How is Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver helping to achieve these goals?

Boys & Girls Clubs empower young people and give them the tools and resources necessary to develop healthy habits and be successful academically and beyond. Often times, they provide a safe space and the right environment conducive to helping our youth thrive.

How can we develop and encourage the next generation of leaders in our state?

There are three things I always tell young people when I’m speaking with them: be kind, work hard, and never quit. These are good lessons for everyone and ones I’ve tried to live by.

What is the most important thing people can do to support kids in our community?

Engage with them. Meet them where they are. Celebrate their every day accomplishments and encourage them to dream big, reminding them that with hard work comes great reward.

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A LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

As the days begin to shorten and the snow begins to fall, we know that the holiday season is approaching. This is a wonderful and cherished time of year to celebrate with friends and family. However, for many of the families that we serve, the holidays can be a difficult and stressful time. Parents who are working hard simply to make ends meet often do not have the means to provide presents or large holiday feasts. Additionally, the colder weather and increased heating bills can make it hard for families to provide their kids with warm clothing and a heated house necessary for families to comfortably make it through the winter months.

Instead of returning hungry to an empty house after the school bell rings because their parents are working, kids can spend time in the Club, getting help with their homework and enjoying a balanced meal. Additionally, Boys & Girls Clubs provide wraparound services to families that might need extra help during these cold winter months. Whether families need help with electricity bills or access to winter jackets, we can serve as the community liaison to get them the support that they need.

With the investment of our donors and community partners, Boys & Girls Clubs are there for families during these difficult times. We connect kids and families with the resources and opportunities they need to reach stability and become successful.



"WE CONNECT KIDS AND FAMILIES WITH THE RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES THEY NEED TO REACH STABILITY AND BECOME SUCCESSFUL."

Fast Facts about Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver:

ON AVERAGE, EACH CLUB MEMBER SPENDS

6,125

MINUTES READING IN THE CLUB DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

200+

CLUB FAMILIES PARTICIPATE IN INTERGENERATIONAL HEALTHY COOKING CLASSES EACH YEAR

CLUB MEMBERS COMPLETE NEARLY

500

SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS EACH YEAR

YOUR INVESTMENT MAKES AN IMPACT ON THE EDUCATION OF OUR CLUB MEMBERS

Through our programs and services, Boys & Girls Club members improve academically, live healthy lives and develop valuable leadership skills.



Over 50 youth at three Clubs participated in a new program designed to help struggling readers. 94% of youth in the program showed improvement in all foundational reading skills.



More than 100 teens completed program-specific training to become peer leaders. Peer leaders assist Club employees with a variety of programs at the Clubs.



BGCMD's healthy lifestyle programs reached more than 2,100 youth. These programs educate kids about drugs, alcohol, tobacco, sexual health, physical fitness and healthy eating.



"THIS IS OUR HIGHEST POSSIBLE RATING INDICATING THAT BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF METRO DENVER ADHERES TO SECTOR BEST PRACTICES AND EXECUTES ITS MISSION IN A FINANCIALLY EFFICIENT WAY."

MICHAEL THATCHER
President and CEO of Charity Navigator

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF METRO DENVER RANKED IN THE TOP 3% OF CHARITIES NATIONALLY

For the seventh consecutive year, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver has earned the heavily coveted 4-star rating from Charity Navigator – America’s largest independent charity evaluator.

Only 3% of the charities evaluated by Charity Navigator have received at least seven consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver outperforms most other charities in America.

“This is our highest possible rating indicating that Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver adheres to sector best practices and executes its mission in a financially efficient way,” said Michael Thatcher, President and CEO of

Charity Navigator. “This exceptional designation demonstrates to the public their trustworthiness.”

Written into Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver’s strategic plan is an overarching goal to manage finances with integrity through maintaining transparency to donors and stakeholders on the annual budget. After a comprehensive review of data from the past fiscal year, Charity Navigator awarded the 4-star rating to Boys & Girls Clubs confirming that these goals are being met.



CLUB MEMBER TONY FINDS STABILITY AND MOTIVATION AT THE CLUB



"I HAVE DONE A LOT OF GROWING UP AT THE CLUB. THIS PLACE HOLDS A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES."

TONY
Club member, age 17

In elementary school, Tony remembers peering across the street at the Johnson Boys & Girls Club with curiosity. By the fourth grade, Tony finally mustered up the confidence to go check it out. Inside, he found a network of kids who were going through similar life struggles along with staff members who genuinely seemed to care about all of the kids that walked through the Club doors. The combination of the two would eventually become the center of his network.

Now, 17-year-old Tony can’t imagine his life without the support of the Club.

“I have done a lot of growing up in the Club,” said Tony. “This place holds a lot of opportunities.”

Born into a single-parent household when his mother was just 15, Tony grew up with very few resources. Finding the Club eight years ago was a major turning point in Tony’s unstable upbringing. The Club became a space that allowed Tony to release his stress, have fun, stay on track academically, and grow to become a strong leader and role model.

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Tony's heart is most content when he is at the Club. **"The Club has signified a space of freedom for me,"** said Tony. **"It is one of the few places that I get the chance to just be a kid."** Over the years Tony has explored the programs the Club has to offer like learning about art, improving his reading skills, and even playing football for the first time. Now, working as a Junior Staff member and president of the Keystone leadership program, Tony's heart remains content as he's able to share these same lessons with the younger Club members. **"I love these kids. It gives me joy to be that role model and friend to them,"** said Tony.

HEART

MIND

You can do anything you set your mind to and for Tony, this means becoming a mechanical engineer. Tony had to learn the hard way about what happens when you don't work hard every day to achieve your dreams. Grieving the sudden death of his aunt, Tony's grades began to suffer as his attendance at both school and the Club dwindled. His mind quickly spiraled into a foggy, negative, and seemingly inescapable space. Until one day Steve, the Club Director at Johnson Boys & Girls Club, reached out to him. **"Steve saw something in me that I couldn't see myself,"** said Tony. **"He challenged me to think about my future. He brought me back to the surface."** If it weren't for Club mentors like Steve, it is quite possible that Tony would not be back on track to graduate high school and pursue his mechanical engineering degree.

Throughout Tony's childhood, the Club has been one of his few stable strongholds. **"My mom was so young when she had me that she was still growing up alongside me,"** said Tony. With no high school diploma or support from Tony's biological father, Tony's mom had many jobs, working hard to make ends meet. The financial constraints often left Tony and his mother in constant search for affordable living. Relying on family members and public housing, Tony's feet were often shuffling from one living spot to the next. Despite all of this movement, Tony is uplifted knowing that he could always rely on the Club. **"The Club has helped prepare me for every unstable moment that has come my way,"** said Tony. **"And it is now helping me build a stable future for myself by preparing me for college."**

FEET

HANDS

You never know if siblings will get along, but after the initial shock of a shifting household faded, Tony has fully accepted and embraced his younger step-brother. **"Six years is a big age gap, but that kid and I are unbreakable,"** said Tony. Hoping to provide his step-brother with a strong male role model, which Tony lacked in his early childhood, Tony rolls up his sleeves and keeps his hands busy turning the pages of his textbooks to set a positive example. Tony mentors his brother and shares all of the lessons that he has learned at the Club. Tony even takes it upon himself to wake his brother up every day to make sure he gets to school on time. Tony also uses his earnings from his Club job to provide financial support when his little brother is in need.

Anatomy of A CLUB MEMBER

THE REPERCUSSIONS OF DENVER'S RISING HOUSING COSTS

There is no hiding it, Denver is one of the most sought after cities to live in. Over the past seven years, Denver's population has grown by roughly 25%, spurred by educated transients flocking in for the year-round sunshine, beautiful Rocky Mountain views, and walkable neighborhoods. As Denver scrambles to keep up with this rampant growth and increase in housing demands, numerous cranes can be spotted in the constantly morphing city skyline bringing new infrastructure to accommodate this residential spike. However, the ripple effect of this change can cause insurmountable obstacles for some residents to overcome.

Denver has rebounded from the Great Recession in 2008 when there were severe cuts in city services. With one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, the Denver economy is now stronger than ever. Contributing to the city's growth is an expansion of services from recycling and composting to library and recreation center hours, along with massive infrastructure investments made possible by rising property values.

However, this growth has led to a cost of living increase primarily driven by skyrocketing housing prices. The median home value in Denver is \$325,000 and the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,350. This produces a major problem for low-income communities, like those where our Club members live. Many renters don't earn enough to cover housing costs and are in deep need of financial assistance. As communities who have been in the area for generations are uprooted, poverty is being pushed to

the edges of the metro area.

If this economic cycle continues, the labor market and economic growth could be stymied as statistics show the need for a mixed-income community and diverse population to maintain a healthy system. The vitality of a city relies on occupations of low- to middle-income workers who are fulfilling the needs of teachers, customer services representatives, nurses, and more. Yet these are the workers who are getting pushed out of the city center and taking their skill-sets elsewhere leading to a diminishing sense of community.

During this time of flux, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver offers stability to community members in need of support. We primarily serve low-income families, many of whom are living in areas deeply impacted by the increase in housing prices. Those that manage to stay rooted in their communities are only able to do so with the aid of outside assistance. By offering the most affordable option for afterschool care in the metro Denver area, Boys & Girls Clubs helps relieve some of the household cost burdens faced by families who are struggling to pay for their increasing housing costs.

Additionally, Boys & Girls Clubs offers wrap-around family services to connect families to community resources to get meet their basic needs. Aiming to keep Club members stable in their school system and in a supportive network, the Clubs ultimately work to foster an environment which helps youth create academically-driven, long-term goals intended to lift them out of the cycle of poverty.



NEARLY
75%
OF BOYS & GIRLS
CLUBS OF METRO
DENVER'S FAMILIES
HAVE AN ANNUAL
HOUSEHOLD INCOME
OF LESS THAN
\$30,000

The above statistics are cited from the following sources:

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Program Support Center

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THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR



*This holiday season, you can help kids
nurture their sense of wonder!
Donate today at my.bgcmd.org/holiday*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Up close with Governor John Hickenlooper



Repercussions of Denver's rising housing costs & the impact on Club families



Meet Club Member Tony - a dedicated Club member and inspiring young leader