



# The Open Door

News from the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell



**December 18, 2018**

## **How does supporting the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell help break the cycle of poverty in Lowell?**

Most of the young people who attend the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell live in low income households, and almost half our members live in poverty. Children who live in poverty struggle not just with having their basic needs met, but with the stress and mental health issues that can come from living in such challenging situations. Additionally, their parents may not have the time or experience needed to help guide them as they make decisions about their future.



At the Club, members feel safe, they receive a healthy dinner, and resources to help them be successful in school. Beyond these basic needs, they also receive mentoring from caring adults, and explore programs like art, music, robotics, coding and more to develop their interests and skills.

Field trips to cultural events, community service projects, sports and recreation events help to continue to expand their horizons. Workplace and college visits help teens begin visualizing what their future might look like.

Mentoring from our staff increases teens' self-efficacy and improves their outlook towards their future, increasing their potential for successful employment. Workforce development programs help teens explore different careers, understand the connection between preparation and success, and gain practical work experience.

From the 8 year old who is learning to make new friends, to the high school student receiving help with college financial aid applications, at the Boys & Girls Club members receive the support and guidance they need to build a brighter future for themselves.

Your support of the Boys & Girls Club directly impacts these youth, by keeping the membership fee at the Club affordable (\$30 per year/\$5 for teens) ensuring that the Club is accessible to those who need it most, and that our kids continue to have a safe haven with

positive adult role models and the tools that they need to level the playing field and break the cycle of poverty.



## Club Members are up for the Challenge



Our Club recently had two teams compete in the [FIRST LEGO® League Robotics Competition](#) in Fitchburg on December 8th. Team Wild Cats and Team Phoenix both had a great showing, with the Wild Cats winning the Innovative Solution award, and the Team Phoenix advancing to Round 3 in the Lightning Round. Both teams are comprised of 4 Club members, ages 13-14.

FIRST LEGO® League (FLL) teaches members how to research challenges facing today's scientists. They then learn to design, build, test and program robots using LEGO MINDSTORMS® technology and apply real world math and science concepts.

FLL inspires members to come up with solutions, use critical thinking, team-building and presentation skills. Participants gain knowledge from their peers by participating in tournaments and celebrate with all teams by understanding and practicing *Gracious Professionalism*. Members embrace the Core Values as participants while learning that friendly competition and mutual gain are not separate goals, and that helping one another is the foundation of teamwork.

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## Teens learn about practicing forgiveness in the face of adversity

A group of Club teens recently attended a screening of the documentary, [Circle Up](#), hosted by Thrive Communities of Massachusetts at the United Teen Equality Center (UTEC) in Lowell. The film told the story of Janet Connors, a mother from Dorchester whose son was brutally murdered in 2001. Janet reached out to her son's murderer to offer a chance of forgiveness, and spent years restoring her relationship with him. The documentary was a story of reconciliation and a call to action for re-framing our society's approach to crime and punishment.

**CIRCLE UP**

During this event, our teens learned a lot about restorative justice. The restorative justice process allows victims to have a powerful voice in telling their offender how their actions made them feel. Offenders have the opportunity to take accountability for their actions in a healthy way, and to restore the broken relationship. Restorative justice is a proven way to reduce the impact of crime in communities.

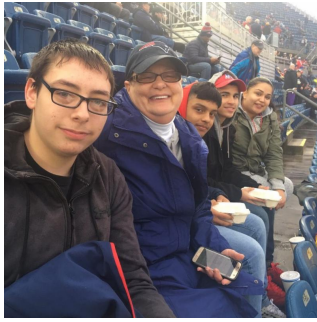
The teens were thrilled to have the chance to meet Janet Connors herself, who was there to answer their questions and share more of her first-hand experience.

Youth Services Manager Alessia Doss says this about the experience *"This event was an extremely positive and thought-provoking experience for our teens. It led to an in-depth dialogue with Club*

staff about crime in their neighborhoods and violence in their families. The teens were very impacted by Janet's strength and ability to forgive her son's murderer, and said they were inspired to practice forgiveness in the face of adversity. Teens also discussed ways in which restorative justice practices could be brought to the Club."

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## Grateful for good times



Club teens Zachary, Ajadus and Milad along with staff members Adrienne and Sally enjoyed an experience of a lifetime when they recently traveled to Foxborough to see the New England Patriots live, thanks to a donation by the Kraft Family Foundation. Though the weather wasn't totally favorable, they bundled up and brought lots of positive energy for their favorite team. They also loved having their picture taken with the Patriots Cheerleaders.



After such an exciting day, it is not surprise that our members slept the entire way home.

Being able to provide memorable experiences for kids who may not have such opportunities with their families is an important part of the Club experience, by building confidence and comfort in social situations, and helping our members feel valued.

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Open the Door for the kids in Lowell who need you most today with a gift to our [Year-End Campaign](#).

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