



The Open Door

**GREAT
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LOWELL**



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Meet our 2019 Youth of the Year



We are pleased to introduce our 2019 Youth of the Year, Anthony Villa. Anthony is a Junior at Greater Lowell Technical High School who hopes to pursue a career in software engineering. He has been attending the Club for 8 years, and while he has been involved in lots of Club programs throughout the years, he cites his experience as a Junior Staff member as one of the most impactful.

"I learned to be aware of my own actions as well as the actions of my colleagues." Being a Junior staff gave Anthony the opportunity to impact Club members the same way the Club staff have impacted him. The "staff made me smile when I wasn't having a good day, and were people I could look to for guidance... As a Junior Staff, I learned how to become a person that the kids could look up to and talk to."

The Youth of the Year program is the most prestigious award in the Boys & Girls Club movement. Candidates must be recommended by Club staff, then complete a rigorous application process that includes writing 3 essays and obtaining references, as well as preparing a speech. Our Club had 6 candidates participating this year, who each were interviewed by 5 community judges as part of the process. Anthony's dedication to the

Club, his commitment to excellence, and drive to continually improve himself stood out to our judges.

Anthony will now go on to the MA State Youth of the Year event in early May. There he will stand alongside as many as 44 other candidates each representing a Boys & Girls Club in Massachusetts each hoping to become the MA State Youth of the Year.

Get a Club teen in your life

Ask any Club member what they like best about the Boys & Girls Club, and you might think it would be 'the recording studio', or 'Sally's food', or maybe 'cool field trips'. But the answer is almost always 'the staff'. It seems each Club member has one or two staff members they relate to particularly well, and these relationships are the heart of the work and mission here at the Club. It is our staff that "inspire and enable young people to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens."

Recently, 16 year old Club member Yvonne shared a bit about her relationship with Club staff. She says, "**There's always someone with open ears that you can talk to and help you with homework and explain stuff to you.**" Yvonne especially relates to her mentor,

Raysam, as they have similar connections in the local African Community, and podcasts that they both like to listen to and discuss. Yvonne recently applied to be the Youth of the Year, and admits, "I got lazy with my Youth of the Year essay, and he got on my back about it. Yesterday I wrote a whole essay. Sometimes you get a little bit lazy – sometimes you want to take a break 'cause there's so much going on. **I am glad he is giving me that push.**"



In turn, Raysam says, "Yvonne's presence and attitude alone is great, she is who I wish I were in high school. She has a shooting star personality." It's clear that they each have a great deal of respect for one another; that Raysam wants to see Yvonne succeed, and she trusts him enough to listen to his advice.

When asked about the impact of the Club, Yvonne says, "(It) has an impact on you whether you want to be impacted or not. You have to help yourself, you have to get yourself involved in all these things and talk to staff. There's lots of opportunities for you, and there are so many things to do to better yourself, and **there are people here to help you do that.**"

Raysam wraps up the conversation by urging people who haven't had much experience with teens at the Club; "Do not discount these teenagers. They can get lumped into people's beliefs about this population, but I feel like people forget they are just a teenager. They are smart and articulate, but also want to do the same thing every teen wants to do like go to the mall and hang out with friends. Don't count them out and don't judge them." He pauses for a moment to collect his thoughts, then smiles and says... "Here is what I want to say to people. **Get a teenager from the Boys & Girls Club in your life.**"

"You can rise above it"



It's hard to imagine a life where gang activity is the norm, and your options feel limited to a life of violence and drugs. Club member Justice Wright describes this exact situation when speaking about his younger years in Oakland, California.

Justice shared his experience with an audience at the State House recently that included Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karen Polito. This event was the announcement of the recipients of funding from the Shannon Community Safety Initiative, a grant program focused on addressing gang and youth violence issues.

The funding, which is distributed to several organizations in Lowell via the Lowell Police Department, has supported programs at the Club like our annual Peace League (a teen basketball league that takes place in the evenings in the summer months) and mentoring for some of our most vulnerable youth. Options like music, art, team sports, robotics, photography, and fitness are the positive alternatives that these young people need to, as Justice says, **"..rise above it and surround yourself with people that have the same mindset as you."**

Read more about Justice's visit to the State House in [this article featured on the front page of the Lowell Sun.](#)

Cool Women, Hot Careers



The catchy name of this day of career exploration at Northeastern University surely inspired the young women who decided to take a trip to Boston one cold Saturday afternoon. Eight young women from the Boys & Girls Club attended the event, hosted by the College of Engineering and the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) last month.

The experience included an introduction and overview of engineering, Q & A with a student panel and hands on engineering activities including: a Civil & Environmental Earthquake Lab- Shake Table Demo, and a Smartphone Hologram Projector. Club members also received a Campus Tour and got to eat lunch with SWE Students.

Women are vastly under-represented in the engineering field, with just 14% of engineers being female. Research shows that exposing young women to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs in the early teen years, helps to build their interest, as well as belief in their abilities to pursue STEM careers – an industry that is evolving and growing quickly. Field trips like "Cool Women, Hot Careers" are part of the Club's Pathways program, designed to help our members explore options and develop a path to a successful future.

Want to get involved?



Helping to serve dinner to our Club members is a fun, rewarding way that you can impact a young person's life. Our Nutrition Manager Sally prepares and serves a home-made dinner to about 250 members each weekday, with the help of part-time assistant Tony. Volunteers help make the service a lot easier.

The commitment can be one time, or as often as you like – and is great for individuals or groups of 4-5 people. Signing up is easy – just visit this link: [Serve meals at the Club](#) and select the date that works best for you. (Please note we are looking for volunteers who are 18 or older).

For more information on volunteer opportunities, contact Volunteer Manager Lindsey Andella at landella@lbgc.org, or visit our web site here [Boys & Girls Club Volunteer](#).

[Make a Donation](#)



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF GREATER LOWELL

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