

# WHATEVER IT TAKES



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB  
OF GREATER LOWELL**

An update on the Boys & Girls Club's COVID-19 response



*Program Director, Alisha Harrison, in costume with grateful Club teen.*

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY

On Friday, March 13, 2020, when the state and CDC determined Massachusetts schools would be closed for the next few weeks, the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell consulted with the Lowell Public Schools, Board of Health, and Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and also temporarily closed its doors for the health and safety of the Club members, their families, staff and volunteers. Club staff immediately began to consider what the member's greatest needs would be, and how services could adjust to meet those needs.

Access to healthy meals is a key resource that kids and teens seek out at the Club, where more than 225 young people eat dinner each weekday. Nutrition Manager, Sally Thayer, put together a plan for bagged lunches that would include the same nutritious components that typical Club meals have. Staff mobilized quickly and began offering meals the first Monday after schools closed, March 16, 2020. Dedicated program staff adapted to help Sally prepare, package, and deliver these meals while observing social distancing guidelines. The team worked to spread the word to the community and sought increased funding in order to provide both lunch and a dinner each weekday. Within a few weeks of starting this service, the Club was serving 500 meals each day to young people in the community via this "Grab and Go" system. The Club also began distributing family care packages with additional meals to be prepared for the weekend, along with toiletries and other household items each Friday.

## AS OF MAY 27TH...

- **26,297** "Grab and Go" meals distributed
- **498** family care packages handed out
- **825** activity kits provided to kids
- **77** instructional videos created and shared
- **112** fun and informative TikTok videos posted

# MEALS, RESOURCES, MENTORSHIP, AND MORE



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB  
OF GREATER LOWELL**

While fine tuning the “Grab and Go” meal service, staff also began assessing what other needs Club members and families might have. A survey was sent to Club families, and phone calls made to parents and guardians. Food was definitely a top concern, but access to productive activities and the mentorship of Club staff was also frequently requested. The staff at the Club are adults that members often look to for guidance, to listen to their challenges, or just provide words of encouragement when times are tough.

Program staff quickly began learning how to translate projects and activities they normally lead in person to a digital format. Small group discussions turned into Zoom calls, art and music lessons became YouTube videos. Staff also used social media platforms to connect with members and send positive messages, and began making phone calls and sending emails to let Club members know they were still there to support them. Additionally, each week an activity kit was sent home with meals to provide materials and hands-on projects for those who may not have resources at home. Our robust volunteer program transferred to a digital format as well, with volunteers offering online tutorials and support to members

“

*Hope for a better future is a big part of what the Club provides during normal times. It is easy to lose hope during a crisis and it is our role to be there for our members to let them know we can get through this.*

*- Joe Hungler, Executive Director*



While the Club will remain closed through June, staff look forward to being able to re-open the doors and welcome Club members back as soon as it is safe to do so. Careful planning on how to safely and effectively provide programs and services is taking place, and staff are once again getting creative knowing that the summer program is likely to be quite different from before. However, it is important that we continue to stay true to our mission and do whatever it takes to help ensure that youth in Lowell who need the Club most remain safe, productive, and open to new opportunities. These kids and teens will need the support of the Club more than ever, and the impact of this situation can affect low income youth far more substantially than their more affluent peers.

Our staff and Club families are extremely grateful for the support of our community who also want to do **whatever it takes** to ensure that the youth in Lowell who need us most are supported during this difficult time.