



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF GREATER
NORTHWEST INDIANA

The Region Needs **Club Kids**

Club Kids Need You.



Issue 5 • November 2025

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

As summer ends and autumn brings vibrant colors and colder mornings, we adults often take time to slow down and reflect on the passing year. Have we accomplished our goals? Are we happy? Do we know our direction for the upcoming year, which, for many of us, arrives much faster than it used to?

At Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana, autumn is also a time for reflection for us as an organization. A new school year has begun, filling our Clubs with both familiar and new Club kids who look to us for guidance and support. For kids and teens who are still developing their self-confidence, having adults who believe in them can make all the difference, and our Club staff are committed to providing that steady, kind presence for all our kids.

While we know that adult mentors like our staff can't solve all challenges, we strongly believe that having a kind, caring adult who can help kids learn about themselves and the world in a safe, comfortable environment can make all the difference. In fact, research from *The Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring* shows that youth with natural mentors are more likely to have more positive attitudes about school, have higher expectations for academic success, perform better in school, and be more socially successful. Evidence also suggests that they have higher incomes as adults.

I have personally seen this to be true as a trained Boys to Men mentor of middle school children where I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I make a positive difference in their lives. I also know with the same conviction that our Boys & Girls Clubs staff make the same difference in the lives of our Club kids every day.

Boys & Girls Clubs provide inclusive and safe places, caring mentors, and life-enhancing programs that boost youth self-esteem, build confidence, and contribute to overall health and well-being. That investment in our Club kids pays off for our communities too: 94% of Club kids report that they try to help when they see people in need,

and 92% of Club kids report that if something is really hard, they keep working at it. These are the kind of friends, neighbors, and coworkers we want in our communities.



Providing these spaces, mentors, and opportunities for our kids to learn and grow comes at a high cost, as you can imagine. It costs us about \$2,400 to provide a year's worth of services to just one child, while families pay just \$50-\$75 per year for Club membership. With that membership, a child can spend every day after school at the Club until 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and until 6 p.m. on Fridays. Where else can you get that kind of amazing, safe, supervised, high-quality childcare, academic help, STEM, art, athletic opportunities, and so much more for less than 10 cents per hour?

As always, our mission continues to be funded locally through wonderful donors and friends like you. Your compassion and commitment make this incredible community service a reality for families and for our nearly 8,500 Club kids, summer campers, and league athletes each year! As our operating costs and need for our services continue to increase, we rely on your kindness and generosity to keep our Blue Doors open across our nine clubs in Lake and Porter counties. Without you, Clubs don't exist. Let's keep making this difference in our communities TOGETHER.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and most importantly, for your dedication to our kids!

With gratitude,

Michael J. Jensen



OUR MISSION

To inspire and enable the youth of our communities to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens.

OUR VALUES

Trust • Teamwork • Opportunity
Accountability • Empathy • Fun

News & Events

RETURN TO LEARN RECAP

Thanks to our wonderful supporters, we surpassed the University of Chicago Medicine \$100,000 match by raising an impressive \$186,594 during our 2025 Return to Learn Campaign! This annual fundraiser, which coincides with the beginning of the school year, ensures our kids have the resources and support to learn, explore, and grow.



During the September campaign, our nine Clubs competed for the top spot through lively events like Penny Wars, local restaurant givebacks, and pie-in-the-face fundraisers. Congratulations to the Hammond Club, which secured the Conference 1 championship for the third year in a row, and the Cedar Lake Club, which won Conference 2! We extend our deep appreciation to every volunteer, staff member, business, and individual donor, especially the University of Chicago Medicine, for fueling this vital campaign and nurturing the scholars and leaders of tomorrow.



COMING TOGETHER CONFERENCE

Our Club kids deserve the very best, which means our staff must be at their best too! In August, we held our annual Coming Together Conference, an incredible two-day all-staff workshop dedicated to learning, growth, and inspiration.

We are especially grateful for grant funding provided by the Legacy Foundation's Transform Lake County Fund. We also thank our amazing in-kind donors, including Sam's Club, Biggby Coffee Portage, Dawn Foods, Albanese Candies, CMG Nutrition, Pestos Italian Restaurant, and Solid Platforms for fueling our team.



New Hires & Promotions

Felicia Mosley: Controller, Administrative Office



Felicia joins us with a strong background in accounting, financial management, and business operations. With experience in corporate and entrepreneurial settings, she is passionate about supporting organizations that make a meaningful impact in the community.

"I look forward to ensuring financial transparency, stewardship, and efficiency so our Clubs can continue providing life-changing opportunities for our youth."

TOLLESTON PROJECT UPDATE



Construction is in full swing at the Tolleston Opportunity Campus! The new structures for the Methodist Health and YMCA facilities are rising alongside the future John Will Anderson Boys & Girls Club. To begin the full, state-of-the-art renovation of our facility (including upgrades to the arts room, STEAM lab, and dance studio), the Club will temporarily close in January. Our kids will attend the Lake Station Club until the spectacular new facility is ready in 2026.

This isn't just a rebuild, it's also a real-world learning lab. Our CONSTRUCT program, supported by Berglund Construction and Powers & Sons Construction, is giving middle and high school students hands-on experience in design, engineering, and safety on our building site.

As John Will Anderson Gary Club Director Brianna Griffin noted, "It's amazing to see three entities coming together to provide promising futures for our youth." We were also honored to host Congressman Frank J. Mrvan for a site tour in September, where he witnessed this powerful community collaboration firsthand.



Our leaders received specialized training using the Clifton Strengths Assessment as part of our commitment to continual improvement. A big thank you goes to Intentional Coaching + Consulting for an inspiring keynote and to our breakout presenters from Jacob's Ladder, Identity Capital Consulting, Robin Sizemore, and our very own

staff who are certified Tier 1 trainers for sharing their expertise. Together, we are building stronger teams to better serve the kids who inspire us every day!

Hannah Raschke: Program Coordinator, Portage Club



Hannah is returning to her roots as the Portage Club's new Program Coordinator. Having been involved with the organization for over 10 years, including a previous tenure at the Portage Club four years ago, she brings a wealth of experience and dedication to her new role.

"I am excited to create a lasting impact on these children that stays with them for years to come. Seeing the kids light up when they walk into the building every day always makes my day!"

CLUB HIGHLIGHTS

MLB PITCH, HIT & RUN

This August, our annual Pitch, Hit & Run skills clinic saw 35 young athletes from the Portage, Lake Station, and South Haven Clubs ready to compete! This event is part of our partnership with MLB's Play Ball initiative, giving participants the chance to work on the fundamentals of baseball and softball, and a chance to advance to the national youth skills competition.



TEEN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

We successfully hosted a vibrant Teen Leadership Conference this fall, bringing together tweens and teens from all nine Clubs in our Torch and Keystone programs. The event featured engaging leadership sessions, team-building fun, and a silent dance party, all aimed at fostering the next generation of community leaders. A huge thank you goes to Absolute Apparel for generously donating shirts for every attendee!



GIRLS ON THE RUN

This Fall, 3rd through 5th-grade girls across four of our Clubs participated in Girls on the Run, now a Verified Partner of Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Through fun and engaging lessons, girls learned more about themselves, teamwork, and relationships. This program is essential because it addresses the whole girl, underscoring the critical connection between physical activity and emotional health, giving them the tools they need to navigate the world with confidence.



SMART MOVES

Our Hammond Club girls enjoyed a sunny Smart Moves session filled with laughter and learning as they explored who they can trust in their lives. This program is made possible through funding from the US Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.



Rachel Hartman: Program Director, Duneland Club



With seven years dedicated to Boys & Girls Clubs, Rachel has held a variety of impactful roles, including Youth Development Professional, Education Coordinator, and Program Coordinator, leading up to her current position.

"I am thrilled for my new role! Every day at the Clubs is an adventure filled with discovery and opportunity, and I cannot wait to see what this new chapter has in store."

Partner News!

MEIJER SPREADS HOLIDAY JOY

We extend our gratitude to the Portage Meijer store #266 for their ongoing corporate partnership and generous support as Presenting Sponsor of our Christmas to Remember event! Thanks to partners like Meijer, our youth can celebrate the holiday season feeling the warmth of a caring community.



SOARING HIGH WITH BOEING

Thanks to the support of Boeing, four members from our John Will Anderson Gary Club met the famous Thunderbird pilots, toured the Boeing hangar, explored aircraft up close, and received valuable career advice. The day concluded with a front-row view of the Thunderbirds' practice for the Gary Air & Water Show. We deeply appreciate Boeing's commitment to showing Gary's youth that the sky's the limit!



UNITED WAY DAY OF CARING

Over 100 volunteers dedicated their time to our Club kids for United Way's Day of Caring on August 1. Whether they were organizing supplies, serving lunch, or simply sharing a laugh and a high-five, their impact was felt throughout the Clubs. Thank you to these incredible volunteers for showing our youth that their community believes in them and for helping us create brighter, more vibrant spaces to learn and grow.



PACERS' LITERACY & PLAY WEEK

During Literacy & Play Week (September 8-12), all 30 Boys & Girls Club organizations in Indiana celebrated a 26,000-toy donation from Pacers Sports & Entertainment. The week was filled with fun literacy and sports activities, but the highlight was the older youth demonstrating true leadership by reading *The Giving Tree* and distributing toys to younger children. We are grateful to the Pacers team and our dedicated staff for boosting our kids' literacy and reinforcing the power of service.





BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF GREATER
NORTHWEST INDIANA

The Region Needs **Club Kids**

Club Kids Need You.



MAKE A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS MAGICAL ON GIVING TUESDAY!



This Giving Tuesday, we invite you to channel your holiday spirit into making a tangible difference for our local youth. Our goal is simple: cover the wish lists for all 500 kids participating in our annual Christmas to Remember event. Many of the families we serve cannot provide a holiday celebration like this, and wish list items often include necessities like warm coats and shoes. For just \$150, you can sponsor one child's list, helping us ensure that each of the 500 kids across our nine Clubs meets Santa, opens gifts, and

creates a positive memory that lasts a lifetime. For \$500, you can become a Jingle Sponsor and make an even bigger impact. Help us reach our goal and make the holidays magical for these kids!



bgcggreaternwi.org/
christmastoremember

SAVE THE DATE: YOUTH OF THE YEAR IS FEBRUARY 26, 2026

Youth of the Year is Boys & Girls Clubs of America's premier national program honoring exceptional teens who embody the organization's ideals. Our annual signature event is a powerful celebration of our Club kids and their remarkable achievements. Look for more details shortly! Seating is limited; email agabbert@bgcgreaternwi.org to reserve your spot today.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: WILL EDMONDS



Will Edmonds was a member of the South Haven Club from third through sixth grade, where he participated in basketball, indoor soccer, and summer camp. Today, he's the Off-Premise Sales Manager at Indiana Beverage, a role he's held for nearly three decades. Will's journey is a powerful testament to the Club's influence.

"Back then, I didn't always fit in at school," Will shared. "The Club was a safe space; it was a level playing field where I always felt welcome and there was no bullying."

He credits the Club for instilling lasting principles: "It showed me what respect is, and I learned what it means to be kind."

Will now lives in Portage with his wife, Cortney, and has two adult daughters who live just a short drive away. He continues to support the mission through Indiana Beverage. His company is a repeat sponsor of our annual golf event, donated 500 holiday meals to Club families this year, and recently donated proceeds from their Valparaiso Brewfest fundraiser. As Will sums up: "The Clubs are so important. They provide structure and teach respect, which are vital for young adults."



Visionary Partners

John W. Anderson
Foundation



DEAN AND BARBARA WHITE
— FAMILY FOUNDATION —



2025 Corporate Partners



CONTACT US

dkoebcke@bgcgreaternwi.org
219-764-2582

VISIT US ONLINE

bgcgreaternwi.org

GIVE A GIFT

bgcgreaternwi.org/give

