

Boys and Girls Club

The Club shut its doors in March as government mandates prevented us from serving youth in person. We stayed connected to our youth through weekly wellness calls, virtual programming, and a summer food give-a-way program. In late August, we knew it was imperative we open our doors to provide some form of in-person programming. Many of our families did not have the luxury of working from home, as many work in the service or manufacturing industry working for hourly wages without paid time off. With that, providing a resource for students and families during out-of-school time was an absolute necessity. In early September we opened our doors as a Learning Center. The sole purpose of the Learning Center was to provide our members a safe space to complete virtual coursework. As previously stated, most children who attend, and continue to attend, our Learning Centers come from families of multiple children, some raised by single parents who work for an hourly wage. Parents are often given an ultimatum: provide for their family or ensure their child stays up to date with their coursework. This is the unfortunate reality for so many. The story of Sophia illustrates the point perfectly. Sophia is a three-year member of the Boys & Girls Club who comes from a single-parent household with an older brother, older sister, and a younger sister and a young niece. She is often under the care of her grandparents due to her mother working rotating hours. When under the care of her mother, Sophia, an 8-year-old, is often responsible for taking care of her two-year-old sister. Imagine an 8-year-old being responsible for feeding, bathing, and dressing a two-year-old while her mother provides for the family. Imagine adding schoolwork on top of an already difficult situation. Sophia came to our Learning Center two weeks after the beginning of the fall semester with zero completed assignments. She had not completed or turned in any assignments from the first day of school until the day she walked in our doors. The staff at our Mike Horn Unit made it their mission to assist Sophia in catching up and staying on track with her virtual learning experience. Staff members worked directly with Sophia's teacher to develop a "game plan" to get her caught up to her peers. Within a week and a half under our care, Sophia was able to get on track with her classmates. Unfortunately, Sophia's story is not unique. Many children, both under our care and not, face the same reality each day. They are forced to choose between their learning experience and managing or surviving the circumstances thrown at them.