

YOUR SUPPORT

helps students like Jordan manage distance learning

Distance learning has been tough on Jordan, a sixth grader at Bemidji Middle School, but she is all smiles now with the support of the Club's new Distance Learning Center.

When Jordan first came to the Center, she had a long list of missing assignments and incompletes. With new assignments piling up daily, Jordan felt overwhelmed and unmotivated. She missed in-person interactions with her teachers. **At the Distance Learning Center, Jordan found the support and tools she needed to get back on track.**

"She was dedicated, and once she got started, she was able to crush her missing assignments one by one," says McKenna Rohe, the Center's assistant director. "Jordan gained more confidence in herself and switched from dreading her schoolwork to looking forward to it."

The Club in partnership with the Bemidji School District launched the Center in November. Club staff worked with middle school teachers and counselors to identify students who were struggling with distance learning or lacked access to computers. Grant funding allowed the Club to remodel space, purchase computers and upgrade internet access.

Participants find caring staff, support from licensed teachers, meals, time in the gym and safe space for socializing, something that many kids like Jordan have missed during the pandemic. Permission for teachers to share progress reports on individual students has also helped students receive the support they most need.

"Today, Jordan is ready for all her classes," says McKenna. "Plus, she has bumped up two full-letter grades since starting at the Distance Learning Center. We are so proud of her."



JORDAN
sixth grader

CLUB MEMBER
SINCE 2018

"Jordan gained more confidence in herself and switched from dreading her schoolwork to looking forward to it."

- McKenna Rohe, DLC assistant director

SPACE TRANSFORMED

A remodel of the former high school weight room created the Distance Learning Center. Two new windows, a heating unit, a sprinkler system, fresh paint, and new countertops and furniture create a fun, interactive education space for up to 15 students.



hydroponics brings gardening indoors

While Club kids love digging in the garden soil, there is more than one way to grow great greens. A new system is coming to the Club.

"We are so excited to have access to year-round gardening with an indoor vertical hydroponic farm," says Andrea Kent, executive director. "Our new Flex Farm will allow our Club kids to grow and eat fresh greens even in the winter."

The hydroponic vertical system by Fork Farms grows fresh, organic greens every 28 days. It can produce as many as 3,400 plants a year, all fueled for growth by LED lights and minimal water.

"This Flex Farm will help us all learn more about sustainability and innovation," says Andrea. "Plus, it will grow produce that our youth can sell to our Club families, the school district and other community partners."

This opportunity is made possible through the AGRI Urban Ag Grant Program of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The grant covered the full purchase of the Flex Farm and funds year-round instruction from the Club's garden manager, Deb Dilley, so more Club kids can hone their green thumbs.



Hydroponics will make it easier for Club kids like Forrest to enjoy greens year-round.

MEET OWEN 2021 YOUTH OF THE YEAR

Owen Stapleton, our 2021 Youth of the Year and sophomore at Bemidji High School, will compete at the state level in mid-April. He credits the Club with helping him grow into a responsible leader since joining in 2013.

"The leadership lessons I learned at the Club helped me understand the importance of a good work ethic," says Owen, who especially appreciates his experience in Career Launch, a program that helps teens explore careers and build job skills. "Staff helped me learn how to be a positive leader."

Owen credits the Club for helping him land his first job, a position at McDonald's where he continues to work. Career Launch is made possible with the support of Enbridge Energy and donors like you. Congratulations, Owen!

*A younger Owen on a trip with
Let's Go Fishing in 2015.*



147 Books read by Club kids
through the BARC program



Joyous GIVING

Sue and Steve Engel

are passionate about improving the lives of children and have poured heart and soul into building great futures for Club youth. That includes making charitable donations with their IRA required minimum distributions (RMD) to help Club kids.

"We've been with the Club since the beginning so it's easy to be passionate about it," says Sue. "It's a joy to see staff so committed to the kids and to see how the kids love the place."

Sue, a founding board member in 2003 and former board chair, now volunteers as a Club administrative assistant sending donors like you notes of appreciation.

Steve, who retired from a career in health and human services, does whatever needs doing at the Club from stuffing envelopes to lawn care.

Sue and Steve are also among the founding members of the Heritage Club for making a planned gift to the Club. Now, they are leading the way with another kind of planned gift with their traditional IRA RMD.

For the Engels, this IRA withdrawal strategy gives them the pleasure of seeing their money in action, doing good for kids. Their RMD comes directly to the Club to invest in children and teens. "It's so easy," says Steve, noting that the gift also lowers their taxable income. A win-win for giving and receiving.

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If you'd like to talk about donating an IRA or other retirement assets as a tax-smart gift, learn more by contacting Emily Fairchild, resource development director, 218-444-4171.



"It's a joy
to invest earnings
back into a place
that we love."

STEVE ENGEL

Partnerships keep us strong!

Mental health is always a Club priority, but especially right now when many of our kiddos are missing the positive social interactions that strengthen social-emotional wellbeing. With the help of new grantors, we are excited about our latest partnerships.



Officer Bergeron creates art with 9-year-old Chaske.

Bemidji Police Department has been sending officers to the Club every week since January so they can play games, do art, or just hang out while building positive relationships with Club youth.

Peacemaker Resources trains Club staff how to foster a more inclusive, culturally sensitive environment and will introduce weekly coaching sessions for Club members and their families to help strengthen social-emotional wellbeing.

Eagle Vista Ranch & Wellness Center will offer equine-assisted learning starting this summer to help youth find support and build resilience.

Tween and Teen Support Groups will offer discussions facilitated by trained professionals for small groups to explore their feelings and thoughts about racism and discrimination.

While it has been a challenging year, it has also been a year of growth. We are grateful to have good friends to help support Club youth and their families.



Shelby Weckwerth

Shelby Weckwerth, unit director

OUR WISH LIST

Laminating sheets, disinfecting wipes, tape of all kinds, six-quart plastic bins with lids. *For more ideas visit bgcbemidji.org/give*



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Join the conversation!
Follow us on Facebook!



Club Week

June 21-25

Schedule a Club tour!

Golf Championship

August 23

Bemidji Town &
Country Club

Questions? Contact Jamie Boyles
jamie.boyles@bgcbemidji.org

double the fun for the summer

Sebastian,
10, loves
spending time
in the sun.



Under revised COVID-19 guidelines, we will be allowed to double our occupancy for the summer. Summer options will include morning, afternoon and full-day sessions for grades 1-5, and an afternoon option for grades 6-12. Membership application deadline is April 30. Follow the fun on our Club Facebook page.

For Black History Month, our first through third graders pondered the difference between white and brown eggs.

Although different on the outside, all the eggs were the same on the inside, a happy discovery.



DERAN, AGE 7

TAX BREAKS IN 2021

WHEN YOU SUPPORT A CLUB CHILD

Congress passed a bill to encourage more generous charitable giving in 2021. The bill allows couples to deduct up to \$600 and singles up to \$300 for cash charitable gifts - even without itemizing. **That is great news for you and for Club kids who count on your support.**