



BOYS & GIRLS
COUNTRY
A Home for Children



BOYS & GIRLS COUNTRY
news
fall 2023

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Howard Family Cottage Blessing

VINCE'S VIEW

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

In my position as the head of Boys and Girls Country, I embrace the sacred mission of nurturing our children to become devoted followers of Christ. In my office, I have a group photo of boys from the early years of Boys Country, long before the merger with Girls Country. The photo is framed with a letter from T. A. Robinson to Jack Brewer, the first executive director. Mr. Robinson writes, "I would like very much for you to guide the staff in its spiritual activities, which you and I both consider to be the most important effort at Boys Country. I want our children to leave us as strong, dedicated Christians, and they could never find a better teacher than you." These words serve as a constant reminder that taking care of children has an eternal purpose.

Brother Jack and I both came to Boys and Girls Country with a background in youth ministry. He and Carolyn have passed away in recent years, but I still feel their prayers as we strive to continue building on their legacy. Many things have changed in the last 52 years, but our Christ-centered mission is stronger than ever.

We have always had dedicated Christian leadership for our students. However, two years ago we hired a Director of Campus Ministries to fully commit to the spiritual formation of our children. Mr. Richard's ministry is a "divine appointment" here at Boys and Girls Country. A football player and graduate of Harding University, his commitment and dedication to our children are exceptional in every way. Mr. Richard's unconditional love for our kids is contagious. His booming voice, big smile and positive energy inspire us to strengthen our faith. Reflecting on his work, he shared this heartfelt message: "In my ministry at Boys and Girls Country, I can only hope a seed is planted in each one of our kids that will give them the hope that only God can provide. I have built relationships with kids and staff that I know will last a

lifetime. I have seen God working in each of them as they grow in their relationship with God. He desires this with each of us."

Mr. Richard knows that youth ministry is more than just pizza parties and board games. Our kids are on a discipleship journey with various ministry opportunities to nurture their faith. In today's culture, children are asking tough questions with skepticism and uncertainty. However, our kids are responding positively to our campus ministry as we develop deeper relationships based on trust and belonging.

Over the past couple of years, our campus ministry has lived out the call to be faithful believers. "Live Sent" has been their mantra, referring to Isaiah's declaration to the Lord, "Here I am; send me" (Isaiah 6:8). In line with this mission, last month we held a private blessing for our new Howard Family Cottage, which is still under construction. We extended an invitation to the boys who will soon reside there, asking them to join us in inscribing inspirational passages onto the framework of the building. Watching the students' thoughtful consideration as they selected and etched their chosen scriptures, which will be preserved within the walls for generations to come, was a joy to witness.

Your support provides us with the opportunity to empower every child at Boys and Girls Country to lead a purposeful and adventurous life. Thank you for helping us make an eternal impact on kids who need a second chance.

Vincent Duran
Chief Executive Officer



Last month, our kids participated in the Waller County Fair and Rodeo as members of the Boys and Girls Country 4-H Club. We had 18 students who showcased their work, including rabbits, goats, creative living projects and a heifer. We are extremely proud of our students and their hard work, especially our Grand Champion winner, Lili, who brought home the prize for her fryer rabbit! See what our kids had to say about their experience in 4-H this year:



Jabarie, 16

I liked taking care of my rabbits because I liked learning how to treat and feed them. They taught me that if you work hard, you can be rewarded for your efforts.

Jelani, 16

I enjoyed getting to work with my heifer and gaining knowledge of the animal. I got to know her personality and how to properly take care of her. She taught me the value of hard work and how to develop a relationship of trust. Showing her at the fair allowed me to make new friends, learn from those with more experience and that sometimes you have to fail before you can succeed.



China, 11

I learned that raising an animal takes a lot of responsibility but if you work hard, you can do well and sell your animal. The best part is that you can go to the fair and eat lots of good food.



Lili, 8

I have been waiting a very long time to do 4-H. I picked rabbits because you get to pet them and snuggle them and spend lots of time with them. I learned that taking caring of rabbits is more fun than I thought it would be because I won a belt buckle and I was very excited about that. Showing them at the fair was great because I got to see horses which are my favorite animal and I got to eat nachos after my show. I am excited to do 4-H again because I might be able to show a goat next year!

Liya, 14

My favorite part of joining 4-H was the time I spent taking care of my rabbits. This was my third year participating and I really enjoy spending time with all the other people in 4-H and getting to work alongside them at the rodeo. I had so much fun!



Wyatt, 13

I like 4-H because I really enjoy raising animals. My favorite part of the fair is getting to help others and spend time with my friends. The best part is we got to go to the carnival after our work was done.

JOSEPH LE

I became a resident at Boys and Girls Country on August 15, 2011, when I was 16 years old. Before that, I lived in a lower middle-class neighborhood in the Spring Branch area. My dad was an overworked steel worker, and my mom worked at Sonic. During the 2008 financial crisis, my dad lost his job as a steel worker, and my family's quality of life significantly trended downward. My parents ended up divorcing, and my dad was unable to sustain a steady stream of income. As a result, bills were late, rent was not paid, and we ended up struggling to eat daily. Both of my sisters moved away to live with their boyfriends while I struggled to find consistent housing, usually staying with friends. I continued to struggle to maintain a roof over my head until around early 2011 when I contacted my godmother, who had previously placed another child at Boys and Girls Country.

My first visit to Boys and Girls Country was a complete culture shock. There was a distinct look to the residence that made it seem like an extraordinary place to be. After meeting the staff, I walked into the cottage and fell asleep immediately. The following week I moved in and attended the first day of the school year. Not knowing anyone, one of the residents remembered meeting me during my initial visit and gave me a warm welcome by introducing me to everyone at school.

“The fondest memory I have from living at Boys and Girls Country would be competing in my first triathlon,” Joseph recounts.

During my first three months, everyone was so welcoming and my days were filled with campus activities and extra curriculars. To this day, I still have a lot of close friends thanks to the camaraderie that was created during all the back to school events. The fondest memory I have from living at Boys and Girls Country would be competing in my first triathlon. I enjoyed the amount of training and discipline that was required, whether it be diet discipline or having to wake up at 5:00 a.m. over the summer to train. The day of the event was rewarding because all the late nights, early mornings, and hard work put into my training paid off as I placed 4th in my age group.



I would say there are three people who have had a lasting impression (and still do) on my life from Boys and Girls Country. The first two are my houseparents, Mr. and Mrs. Stuckey, who taught me what it was like to have loving parents who were fair, impartial and willing to endure early mornings for cross country practice and late nights. They are the epitome of what I imagined a parent would be. They have given me life changing guidance while allowing me to fail in a controlled setting. They gave me a hard work ethic and have, in a nutshell, refined what my strengths and weaknesses were into something that I can apply in a real-world job. My current success is a direct reflection of their passion.

The third person would be one of the board members, Mr. Steve Stephens, who has continued to be a part of my life. We have regular conversations during which he imparts his thoughts and recommendations on how to approach personal growth and work problems. He is always willing to open his schedule to offer genuine guidance and has opened his home and family to me. He has been a stellar mentor.



My time at Boys and Girls Country was transformative. I had zero guidance or direction beforehand. I look back and can state unequivocally that if I did not join Boys and Girls Country I would still be on the streets of Houston or in jail. I have decided to not let the skills and life lessons I learned at Boys and Girls Country go to waste. I have a second start at life, and I have worked to ensure that I achieve what Boys and Girls Country offers to every resident, the opportunity to become a contributing member of society.

Because of my desire to take on a job with a significant number of challenges with the gratification of improvement and promotion, I commissioned in the United States Army April 30th, 2021, and I am currently a Company Executive Officer.

I am consistently reevaluating myself to implement the morals and ethics I learned at Boys and Girls Country along with the skills that I have learned as a Commissioned Officer in the United States Army. I want to help as many kids as possible fulfill their potential in life through mentoring. I also want to ensure that my future kids don't go through the same adversity I went through and teach them the life lessons that I have learned, thus allowing them to have an easier start on life.



“I am consistently reevaluating myself to implement the morals and ethics I learned at Boys and Girls Country,” Joseph notes.



Joseph with Mr. and Mrs. Stuckey



Joseph with BGC Board Member, Steve Stephens



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We regret any errors or omissions and would appreciate notifications of corrections.

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That every child has a place to grow up and a sense of being home.

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Amidst the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, we are committed to creating a safe and joyful environment for our children. These typically cheerful times can sometimes pose emotional challenges for our kids, who may experience feelings of uncertainty and loneliness. We ask that you join us in prayer for the following:

- That our children know they are loved and cherished
- That our houseparents are able to continue meeting the emotional and physical needs of the children who call BGC home
- Safe travels for our College and Career students as they return home for winter break
- For God's blessings over our community as we continue to grow and welcome new children into our home

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Some names may have been changed to protect the privacy of our children and their families.