

# BOYS & GIRLS C O U N T R Y News

Fall 2019

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## Message from the Chief Executive Officer

### Vince's View

Boys and Girls Country (BGC) will always be a safe haven for children from hard places. I have learned over the years that healing cannot take place until a child feels safe in his surroundings. "Felt safety" is a term used to describe the importance of a safe environment for a child from a traumatic background. We do not just tell kids they are in a safe place; we want to make sure they feel safe in their new home.

We have a dedicated clinical team that meets the needs of our children. BJ Barksdale is our Clinical Director and past president of the Texas Counselors Association. She also has specialized training to help children from traumatic backgrounds. Dr. Tan has been working with us for nearly two decades as our psychiatrist, helping meet the psychotropic needs of our kids, and his love and commitment goes far beyond medical care. Christian Penalzoza, our campus minister, is a seminary graduate and has also trained as a biblical counselor to help meet the spiritual component of a child's life. Our team will continue to use their training and expertise, but we all know only God can heal our pain and affliction.

Some of our kids have faced a level of poverty that many of us will never experience, yet they acquired resilience through that hardship. Mother Teresa observed, "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty." The good news is that God will use our hands and hugs to help our children find healing and restoration.

The writer of the book of Psalms declares, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). Healing can take place instantly or it can be a process. Sometimes our impatience does not allow us to trust God's process even though He is sovereign and in control of our lives. But we are encouraged that He will not allow pain to come into our lives unless it will produce a deeper sanctification and a closer walk with Him.

**His ways are not our ways,  
and His timeline for healing  
is always orchestrated to  
perfection.**

When new children arrive at BGC, it is amazing to witness their mixed reactions during their first week. Some of them feel comfortable almost immediately and others need a little more space. However, the one thing that is consistent is that it will take time to trust us and time to adjust to their new home and new friends. Regretfully, many family members and adults in their lives have broken their trust. It is our duty and honor to guide them towards building that foundation all over again.

On behalf of the children at Boys and Girls Country, I want to express my deepest gratitude. Your ongoing love and support continue to help us advance our mission. We are grateful beyond words, and we really cannot do it without you! ❤️

**Vincent Duran**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Walk of Hope Tour

Curious about life on our campus and in our cottages? Would you like to see firsthand the warm, family-oriented home your support makes possible?



Come join us for a tour of our campus and cottages. It's an hour of wonderful stories, great information and an inside look at where our children live. This is not a fundraising event. Bring only an open heart and a friend.

Below are our upcoming tour dates. You can find more information on our tours on our website.

**Saturdays at 10 a.m.**  
**Meet in the Administration Building**

- November 9
- January 11
- February 1
- March 7

Give securely online at [www.boysandgirlscountry.org/donate](http://www.boysandgirlscountry.org/donate)

## Student Spotlight

# Healing In a Christian Community

For many years our children have been given the opportunity to participate in a unique retreat called Vida Nueva. Vida Nueva (VN) is a three-day Christian retreat weekend and movement for youth, encouraging teenagers to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and to live as Christian leaders in their home, church and school. The young adults spend the weekend growing in a community, sharing their testimonies, strengthening social skills and making friendships that will last a lifetime.

The majority of children who live at Boys and Girls Country are 13-18 years old, and many of them choose to participate in a VN retreat. The weekend includes a series of talks given by clergy, youth and adults, all following the basic themes of Christianity in its day-to-day application, and are followed by table discussions. The format is designed to help teens break down the barriers of fear and anxiety around peers, help them see their value through Christ and discover their potential to serve others.

BGC kids who have participated - many of whom have experienced trauma - say it changed their lives. The transformation is not easy, however, because it requires trust, vulnerability and lots of prayers. Given that most of our kids come from unstable environments, they hesitate to open up to others, especially their peers. Overcoming that first step proves to be a crucial moment for many of them.

Thankfully, their spiritual growth does not stop at the retreat. VN members and leaders hold weekly, in-depth bible studies for our children. Some of

our kids also serve on VN committees, allowing them to grow as leaders, guide newcomers, reconnect with friends and contribute to the growth of their Christian community.

For Marvin, his first VN retreat was life-changing. He was inspired to be baptized and commit his life to Christ, and it helped him grow from a shy and disconnected teenager into a campus leader who participates in 4-H, the Leadership Council and Teen Court. Opening up about his walk with God, he says the hardship of having a broken family helped him cultivate deep relationships with others, and he realized he had a passion for serving people. His passion for serving was recognized, and this year Marvin serves on the committee to plan the weekend retreat.

**"I loved spending time with my peers there. At first, I did not understand how opening up to others could be beneficial. Then I understood that it gives me an opportunity to connect with others on the deeper level. It helped me connect with my cottage brothers at BGC and encourage them to participate in VN. I am forever grateful for this opportunity that helped me discover my passion for helping others,"** shared Marvin.

Striving toward God is something all the children at Boys and Girls Country are encouraged to do. It helps them understand that God has given them the ability, and responsibility, to change the lives of people around them at school and in the community. ❤️



Marvin opened our Senior Day celebration in prayer.



Marvin and Alexis recognized for their service in Teen Court.



This year he earned "Faith in Action" award at the Children's Awards Banquet.

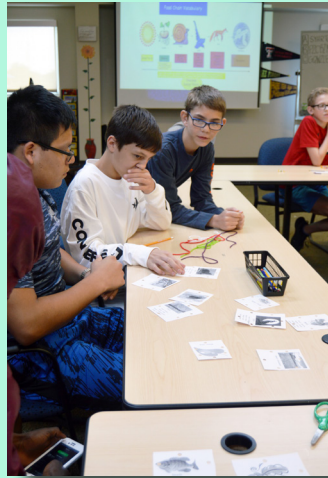
Thank you to our Corporate Sponsor: Trenegy

# BOYS AND GIRLS COUNTRY'S Summer IN REVIEW

Every summer our children and young adults have amazing opportunities to learn, create, serve and play on and off campus. Thanks to the support of many individuals, organizations and businesses, our kids thrive in the BGC summer program! Below are a few snapshots from their summer fun. ♥



Our kids were encouraged to be more active this summer, and our girls did not take it lightly. They were going the distance together!



One of the exciting activities throughout the summer was STEM Mondays with Gulf Coast Organization. It was a great opportunity to keep kids academically engaged and challenged while having fun.



The Cottage 7 family did an awesome job working with Cy-Fair Lions Club. They put together 500 lunches for Pre-K children.



Thanks to Tube Supply, our kids had the opportunity to work on their soccer skills and play a game together.



K.J. won a "sweet" prize for his creative design at the Cupcake Wars, hosted by the NCL West Houston Helping Hands.



Our kids had the privilege of hearing from graphic artist and author Kevin Johnson, who shared his success story and taught the kids about storytelling.



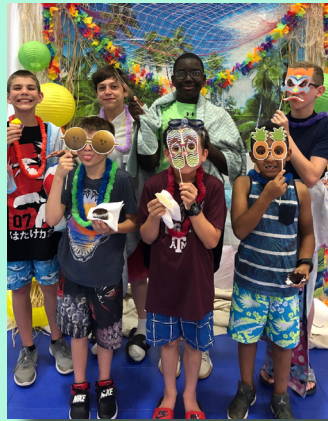
Our young adults took an amazing field trip to Southwestern Energy, where they enjoyed a science experiment using salt as an electricity source. They also had lunch with SWN interns and participated in a resume and career skills workshop. Thank you to Southwestern Energy for inspiring our kids to dream big!



We are so thankful for Group 1 Automotive, Sterling McCall Hyundai and BGC board director Paul Sorensen for donating a car to Boys and Girls Country! This was such a blessing, especially as our 13 high school graduates transitioned into college and work routines.



What a fun trip to the coffee and sugar factory! The kids learned about the different steps of coffee and sugar processing and explored the factory. Thank you to Carlos De Aldecoa Bueno for giving our kids a private tour!



The NCL Cypress Pearls helped usher in the summer with a fabulous kickoff party. Games, treats, fun and fellowship were enjoyed by all. Thank you for celebrating the season with us!



Brandie was baptized! We are so excited to walk beside Brandie in her faith with God.



Farid participated in a three-day football camp at Texas A&M University. He was very excited to learn new skills at one of the best programs in the country! The highlight of his experience was meeting legendary coach Jimbo Fisher. Thank you for blessing our kids with once-in-a-lifetime opportunities!



We are so thankful to Trenegey for hosting our young adults for a career fair and teaching them important skills of business communications. Thank you for investing your time, talent and heart into our children!

# HERITAGE *Award* DINNER

The Heritage Award Dinner is the largest annual fundraising event supporting Boys and Girls Country. The first dinner was held in 1992 when our faithful friends and supporters, Tom and Mary Steele, were honored and the event raised a net of \$85,000. The event has grown significantly since that time and features top-notch comedic entertainment.

On Wednesday, October 30, Boys and Girls Country celebrates our 28th annual Heritage Award Dinner at the Hilton Americas! The evening's guests will have the pleasure of hearing from our kids firsthand about how Boys and Girls Country has impacted their lives and will be entertained by none other than legendary comedian Jeff Foxworthy.

## Honoring The Scianna Family



Chuck Scianna is the President and Co-founder of Sim-Tex, L.P., a leading supplier of oil country tubular goods to the oil and gas industry. He and Rita, his wife of nearly 45 years, reside in Bellville. They have two daughters, Ashley and Stephanie, and four granddaughters. Chuck and Rita are active members of Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Community.

Chuck is an alumnus of the University of Southern Mississippi, where he is a member of the Alumni Hall of Fame. Chuck serves on the boards of USM Foundation and USM Athletic Foundation. He has been president of the Waller Economic Development Corporation since 2006. Chuck proudly served in the U.S. Marine Corps and is on the board of the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation. Rita received her nursing degree in 1993. She became an Oncology Certified Nurse and worked in the field for 15 years.

Ashley and her husband, Clint Sciba, both serve on the board of Waller County Fair Association. Clint is currently on the board of Grace Christian Academy in Waller, where Ashley has also formerly served. Ashley has served on the Waller Area Chamber of Commerce since 2011.

Stephanie and her husband, William Latham, are very active with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation where they strive to raise money for a cure. Stephanie also serves on the board of Reach Unlimited and is a committee member for the annual Marine Corp Scholarship Foundation Houston Awards Dinner.

The Sciannas truly have hearts for the kids who call Boys and Girls Country home. Chuck has served on the board of directors, and the entire family has been involved for more than a decade with Spring Festival and as sponsors of the girls in Watford Cottage. The family, with Stephanie at the helm, throws the annual Day of Wonder Christmas party each year for Watford cottage.

In addition to all they do at Boys and Girls Country, the Scianna family supports numerous other charities including the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Weekley Family YMCA, Reach Unlimited, Austin and Waller County Fairs and various educational institutions and youth organizations. ❤️

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# Taking Advantage of Being Independent

Summer was a big time of transition for the 13 seniors who graduated in May. They were settling into the Transitional Living Program and acquiring new skills to become independent. They registered for classes, they worked, and they saved up for their first vehicles. Our young adults were also able to have fun going together on a senior trip to San Antonio, floating the river and soaking in the sun. In all situations, our students are relieved to have the support of their mentors and fellow College & Career students. Occasionally they even go back and have dinner with their cottage.

For David, becoming more independent was a familiar feeling. David was born in the United States but spent most of his life in Mexico, where he had to rely on himself to meet his own basic needs and those of his siblings. He recognized that it was a dangerous place to live with few opportunities for a better future. He grew up in the strife between the locals and the immigrants and the economic turmoil it caused. After living with his relatives on and off, he ended up back in the U.S. three years ago.

When he arrived at Boys and Girls Country, he could not believe he would be able to live in a safe family environment. He was excited to take advantage of the opportunities available to him to build a better future. At the same time, he had a hard time adjusting to the structured environment at BGC.

David faced many challenges when he arrived here. Adaptation to a new world and culture has been extremely difficult for him. He missed the culture of the Mexican community, the food he grew up eating and the friends who watched his back. His English was very limited, and school became a nightmare for David. When David completed his educational assessment, it revealed that he has dyslexia.

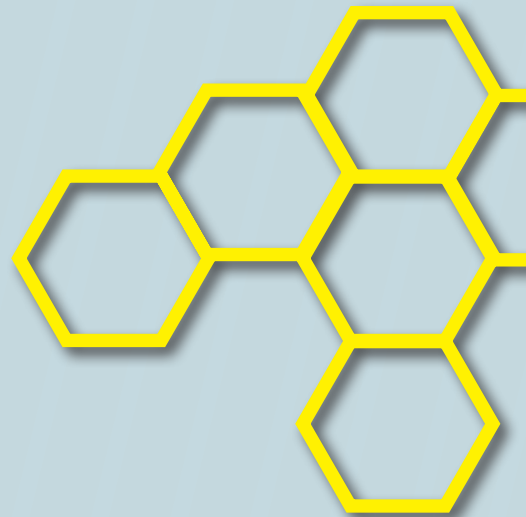
Dyslexia was the primary reason for his educational setbacks. He always had trouble understanding and learning things at school but never knew what the problem was. After the diagnosis, David was able to overcome that pain and find a path to successful learning. Thanks to accommodations requested at school along with tutoring in our education lab and counseling services to cope, David was able to get his grades up. Most importantly, he realized that dyslexia did not make him less; it was just a different way of learning. He says that his brain is wired differently, and now he sees it as a blessing.

Today education is something David pursues with passion. He loves math and is studying engineering at Prairie View A&M University. His schedule is busy with a part-time job while pursuing school full-time. He loves working close to BGC's main campus so he can visit his cottage and younger brother. He dreams of owning his own house and a business to be able to bring his family together in a stable environment.

"Our family struggled for so long, and there was always a sense of despair. That's why I want to have my own place where we can reunite. Family means everything to me. BGC taught me that it does not matter where you are coming from, you are accepted here. That's why BGC is my family too," shared David. ❤️



**David**



**David and his brother Adrian**



# Our College and Career Students In Action

Our College & Career students have been experiencing independent life. Through challenges and exciting milestones, our College & Career mentors are always available offering the support they need.



**College & Career Mentor Stephen helped Firezer change a flat.**



**College & Career students enjoyed a Texans game together.**



**Leo (#39) played his first football game at Texas Lutheran College.**



**Joseph Le has been accepted to Officer Candidate School with the US Army. He was all smiles with his recruiter after the swearing-in ceremony.**



**Destiny moved in at Wharton County Junior College.**



**Akia settled in his dorm room at Bethel College.**

## Donor Spotlight

# UPS Supports BGC



Boys and Girls Country is only able to help children from families in crisis because of the generosity of our many friends. Each year, we have approximately 1,500 donors whose belief in our mission makes our work possible.

Many of our supporters are members of the Family Tree, a group of donors who choose to make sustainable monthly gifts. Our kids have recently been blessed by monthly donations from employees of a local UPS distribution facility. It all started with one employee who is passionate about helping children.

Richard Lamb became involved at BGC more than 10 years ago. He has been supporting children from difficult circumstances for many years because he identifies with the hardships they face in their lives. "At the age of 12 I lost my dad, and my mother had issues. I did not have anyone I could rely on. I started spending a lot of my time on the bicycle to save my life," shared Richard. For him cycling was about personal growth and community, and it provided the support he needed in the roughest times of his life.

He realized the opportunity cycling could provide for young adults from families in crisis. Then, 10 years ago at a cycling event, Richard met Jim Stuckey, one of BGC's teaching parents, and they instantly connected.

Jim and Richard became committed to creating a cycling program at BGC to nurture deeper relationships with the kids. Through the years they have taught the kids the benefits of cycling and keys to personal and spiritual

growth. Richard took it upon himself to provide as many opportunities as possible to take BGC's young cyclists to various states and competitions.

"They look at Richard as another father figure," shared Jim. "He is still involved in their lives even after they leave the program. He will do anything to support them," added Jim.

Richard has become a successful leader at UPS in his 34 year tenure. He manages 100s of employees daily and builds close relationships with them. "We all have a story, and this is our chance to help others," shared Richard. One of his employees is Joe, a driver with UPS, whose mom struggled when he was a kid. She relied on the resources in the community to help their family stay together, and now he is giving back by supporting the kids at BGC.

Richard's passion for supporting our kids is contagious because he knows firsthand that BGC helps kids break the cycle of poverty, pain and despair. Thanks to his leadership, Joe and 40 other UPS employees became members of Boys and Girls Country's Family Tree. They chose to make monthly donations to BGC, and together they have raised more than \$10,000 in a matter of a few months.

We are so thankful for Richard and his inspiration and commitment to serve children. And we are so thankful to God, who continues bringing amazing people into the lives of our kids. They give sustainably; they understand that raising children does not stop at one donation. It is a lifetime commitment to be there for them no matter what. ❤️



Join our family tree online: [bit.ly/bgcfamilytree](https://bit.ly/bgcfamilytree)

# June 1 - September 30, 2019

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Thank you for remembering someone special with a gift to our children at Boys and Girls Country.

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John F. Sullivan  
Mark Taylor  
Howard L. Wagner  
T. Michael Young

# A Smart Way to Use Your IRA!

- Plan now to make an income tax-free gift from your IRA in 2019.
- Your gift counts toward your required minimum distribution.

If you are over the age of 70½, you can make a direct transfer from your IRA to Boys and Girls Country of Houston.

Your gift will provide support for our work with children - not just today, but far into the future as well. It can also satisfy your required minimum distribution, and you can avoid income tax on the distribution.

There is no need to wait until the end of the year to make an IRA Charitable Rollover. To learn more, please give me a call at 281-803-3155, and I'll be happy to guide you through the process. As always, I look forward to hearing from you. ♥

**Ryan Kenney**  
Director of Development

*Not intended as legal, tax or investment advice.*

## Mission

To change the lives of children from families in crisis by loving and nurturing them in a Christian home environment, raising them to become self-sustaining and contributing adults.

## Vision

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

*For questions about this mailing or to make an address change, please call 281-351-4976. Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of our children and their families.*

## Make Your Contribution Online!

Your gift today will ensure children from families in crisis have a safe home, a loving family, and a future as successful and contributing adults.

Give securely online at  
[www.boysandgirlscountry.org/donate](http://www.boysandgirlscountry.org/donate)  
Thank you for your gift to change the lives of our children!



To donate by mail, simply include and return your donation in the envelope enclosed.

## Connect with us!

**Contact Information:**

info@boysandgirlscountry.org  
Phone: 281.351.4976  
Fax: 281.351.4978

