

BOYS & GIRLS C O U N T R Y News

Summer 2020

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Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Vince's View

I have the wonderful opportunity to see firsthand the many stories that unfold at Boys and Girls Country of Houston (BGC). The stories of our children never cease to amaze me and remind me of God's provision. These children came to BGC to find hope and a future in a safe and loving environment.

Alyssa's story is similar to many children who have come from hard places. She arrived at BGC two years ago with a desire to finish high school and pursue higher education, but it was not going to be an easy task since she was two grade levels behind her peers. "I wanted to drop out because I was behind in school, and I wanted to take care of my mom. I did not want to be at school all day and leave her alone for hours. My mom has been in a wheelchair for the past seven years, and I had been taking care of her since I was eleven years old," shared Alyssa.

Although she had to assume major responsibilities as a child that put her behind, she has pursued every opportunity to succeed in school. She is now a proud graduate of Waller High School and made it to the finish line to join the class of 2020. Alyssa has a new outlook on life and a fresh perspective: "My hope has changed because I never thought I would get this far," commented Alyssa.

The sky is the limit when a young person can find hope. We have been helping families and children find hope and healing for 49 years. Every May when the school year ends, graduation is a reminder of how critical our mission is. But high school graduation is not the final step for the students at BGC. Alyssa will join our College & Career program and begin her coursework at the local community college. She hopes to transfer to Texas A&M University after two years. We will support Alyssa and our other graduates through their college years or vocational training. They have a chance to graduate college debt-free, and they will always be part of the BGC family.

Not only did Alyssa earn a high school diploma, but she also established a personal relationship with God. "I rarely went to church or read the Bible before coming to live here," says Alyssa. She credits her teaching parents and



cottage roommate for helping her read the Bible with understanding and clarity. We continue to see the incredible impact of our mission as our children grow in their faith. My prayer is for every child at BGC to declare, "For you have been my hope, Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth" (Psalms 71:5).

"Not only did Alyssa earn a high school diploma, but she also established a personal relationship with God."

I am thankful that despite the global crisis of COVID-19, 10 BGC students graduated from high school in 2020 and another student graduated from college. I commend our staff and teaching parents for their hard work and diligence, especially during the stay-at-home order. Online instruction and "crisis teaching" became new initiatives

for our staff and children, but they were fearless as they stepped up to meet the challenge. We have felt your love and prayers in recent months, and your faithful giving continues to amaze me. Thank you so much for loving and supporting our kids while they needed it more than ever. ❤️

Vincent Duran
Chief Executive Officer

P.S. If you are interested in learning more about Boys and Girls Country and touring our campus, please send us an email to supportkids@boysandgirlscountry.org or call 281.351.4976.

Give securely online at www.boysandgirlscountry.org/donate

College and Career

First-Generation College Graduate

Tracey came to Boys and Girls Country from a family that was torn apart by drugs. Her family situation did not offer the stability needed to grow into a healthy adult, and she needed to leave that environment to avoid the pitfalls of her parents. Since 2011, BGC has been Tracey's home.

This summer Tracey is graduating from Texas State University with a B.S. in psychology. This huge achievement makes her a first-generation college graduate. She has always been interested in the sciences, and this milestone feels like a dream coming true.

"I have enjoyed studying science, and I am passionate about helping patients," shared Tracey.

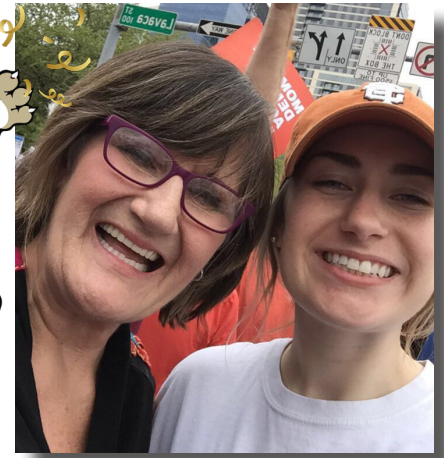
The college experience has been difficult and stressful, admits Tracey. In her five years of higher education, she was able to overcome many challenges with the support of the College & Career program.

"They offered me emotional and spiritual support to get through the tough times. I am thankful for the financial help BGC provided to earn this degree. BGC was my family through all of this," commented Tracey.

Tracey is looking forward to graduation, even without the normal ceremony. Her next step is to find a job in the medical field so she can gain experience and save money. Her dream is to receive a Medical Lab Technician certification in the next two years so she can advance in the field of microbiology.

Tracey is thankful for the amazing years at Texas State University. She enjoyed making new friends and living in San Marcos. She values the opportunities this degree offers her to build a better future. The college experience increased her perseverance and taught her to think outside of the box. ❤️

Way to go, Tracey!



Get Involved



Ways You Can Help

Although visitors are temporarily restricted from our campus, you can still make a difference in our kids' lives! Opportunities for your consideration include:

- Making a cash donation.
- Purchasing supplies from our BGC Amazon list: www.bit.ly/wishlistbgc (Remember to choose "Boys and Girls Country of Houston" as the charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases through AmazonSmile.)
- Praying for our kids and staff.

Feel free to reach us at supportkids@boysandgirlscountry.org if you have any questions, suggestions or words of encouragement. ❤️

Back to School Fall 2020

As of this writing, we do not yet know how COVID-19 will impact our education system, but we know that in some ways things are not going to be the same. In March, our program staff and kids had to adjust overnight to remote schooling, which required a whole new kind of organizational skills, as well as different resources and tools. Our teaching parents had to get used to the idea of becoming “homeschool teachers” to an entire cottage of kids, all with different classes and needs.



All these sudden changes were a bit trying for everyone on campus. The kids had to quickly readjust their focus and manage their related stress. The teaching parents had to establish a new structure for our kids that used to be provided at school.

Some BGC students were easily able to maintain good grades and habits; others struggled to find motivation and needed more support.

Our 10 seniors, already battling “senioritis,” had to find the drive within themselves to make that last push to graduate. The path towards independence is sometimes a difficult one, and the pandemic made the future for them more uncertain. They missed their friends and the school community that played such a big role in their lives. All of these new stressors were piled on top of their past traumas that they worked so hard to overcome.

Our education lab had to make adjustments as well. Before the schools closed, 25-35 students utilized the lab on a daily basis. That number quickly grew as all our students needed computers, access to the internet, help with homework and tutoring every day. Yet in the midst of this crisis, some of our kids found ways to excel.

Angela arrived at BGC six years ago and always had educational challenges. She is very smart, respectful and

eager to become the best student in her cottage. However, she is super-focused on every detail and has difficulty finishing assignments within a reasonable amount of time. This has always set her back and diminished her confidence in the ability to succeed.



When remote learning started, her teaching parents were not sure how she would manage. She missed her teachers and after-school activities. School provided the structure and recreation she was missing in her life before coming to BGC. Her patient teaching parents encouraged her to do her best and keep going each day. She sought help at the education lab and stayed on top of her assignments. Despite the circumstances, Angela’s grades started to go up.

“Even if she was working for five hours, she would finish her assignments and be very excited about it”, shared Michaela Fuentes, Director of Education. “We have several kids on campus who are thriving in a school-from-home environment. It is a blessing!”

Angela began to feel a new sense of accomplishment, which encouraged her to improve in other areas of her life. She has been a great helper in the kitchen, and she’s kept busy with DIY projects and crafts or dancing on Wii with her cottage sisters. The confidence she’s gained helps her encourage others.

“My goal is to grow and become a better person. I do not like to give up,” shared Angela.

Thanks to you, Angela has hope, strength and faith that whatever hardships are ahead, she is prepared to face them. Your support provides loving and caring parents for kids who would be in very vulnerable situations otherwise. They feel the stability and safety of a home, and they are able to focus on achieving their goals.

Dear Friends,

At Boys and Girls Country, we know that education is absolutely critical for a successful future. Education will always be one of our top priorities, whether the kids are back in the school building full-time, schooling from home, or some combination in between. Unfortunately, children in “out-of-home placements” like BGC are less likely than their peers to earn a high school diploma or GED, and our kids often come to us several grade levels behind their peers in key subjects.

With the new school year fast-approaching and the uncertainty still surrounding it, our kids need the love and security that BGC provides more than ever before to continue making progress in school. When you give, you make sure our kids are fed and have their own beds to sleep in. You also help them grow their social skills, overcome trauma, and find healing and hope. All of these things allow them to focus on learning and pave the way for a better life.

Current economic forecasts, the volatility of the stock market and the slowdown in the oil industry have put a strain on our resources and those of the entire community. However, we remain committed to our mission of changing 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.

For 49 years, you have helped us care for our kids. Now, as we prepare for the upcoming school year, we ask that you prayerfully consider making a gift to invest in their futures. Your gift of \$50, \$100, or \$250 or more helps BGC weather this crisis and continue to be a place of healing and safety for our kids. You may give using the enclosed envelope or securely online at www.boysandgirlscountry.org. (Choose “Back to School” as the “Purpose of Gift”.)

We are so thankful for your support. Every gift ensures that our mission is alive and that the future of our children and young adults is bright. ❤️

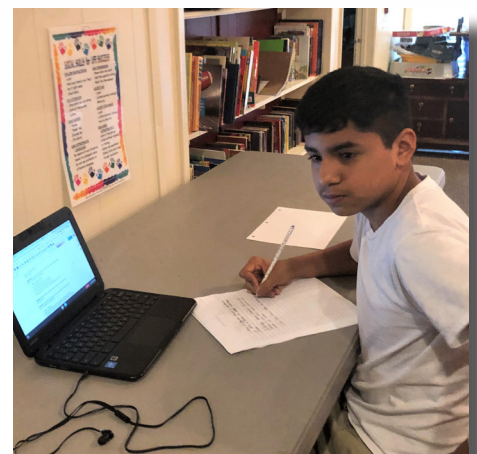
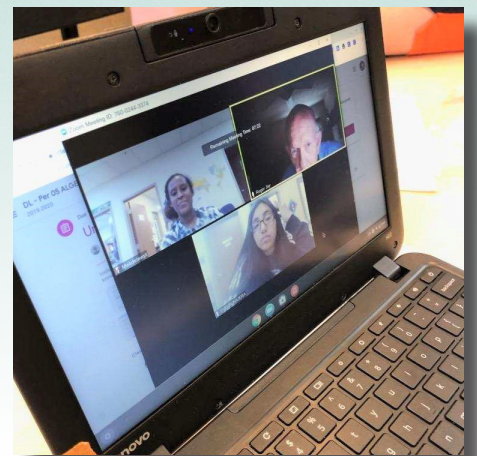
Thank you for loving our kids,



Vince Duran
Chief Executive Officer



P.S. We have created a new way for you to stay in touch with our campus and give easily. Subscribe to our text alerts by texting “BGC” to 22999. We will share recent news, exciting updates and ways you can help throughout the year.





Boys and Girls Country SPRING FESTIVAL 2020



It was a difficult decision to **cancel our Spring Festival**, and we missed seeing our Boys and Girls Country family on campus and celebrating our amazing mission together.

To share the joy with our supporters online, our cottage families made a video about how they celebrated their own mini-version of Spring Festival at home. You can view it on BGC YouTube channel by visiting this link: www.bit.ly/sfvideo2020

We are thankful to all of our sponsors who believe in our mission and help make it a reality. Your commitment is vital to ensure that BGC continues to be a loving, safe home for children from families in crisis. Thank you for your support of the 2020 event, and we look forward to next year. ❤️

**Spring Festival 2021 on
May 1, 2021!**

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Emergency Update

Thanks for Supporting BGC Kids During COVID-19 Crisis

The safety of our families and our community is of utmost importance to us. As the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic became evident to us, we made the difficult decision to cancel our Spring Festival, postpone our Pedal for a Purpose bike ride, and suspend individual and group volunteer activities. Our 10 Waller High School graduates did not experience a typical graduation ceremony or their graduation parties. Our kids miss our friends and visitors because you play such a vital role in raising them to become self-sustaining and contributing adults.



We are so grateful for your generosity, even as the uncertainty of our world continues. Without your support, our children and young adults would be in vulnerable places right now, possibly homeless or without food or unable to continue their educations. Thank you so much for your calls, emails and gifts that supported our emergency funding request. We have received many messages of encouragement about why our mission is important, and we wanted to share them with you. ❤️

“BGC is a wonderful organization that benefits so many children within our community. It’s amazing to see the impact BGC has on each child that enters their facility, whether as a resident or a volunteer. It’s a truly remarkable organization.”

Julia Schaffner, NCL Cypress Gems

“We felt like BGC would be overlooked at this time. With all of the charities so much more publicized, we thought you’d be hurting too and knew it would go to good use.”

Betsi and Ed Mellor

“This place has been a blessing to my life. I just want to give back because I will always be grateful for what this place has done for me. God bless you.”

John Camacho, BGC alumnus

“If ever there was a safe and caring sanctuary for kids to be fostered in a Christian based community, Boys and Girls Country is it. Donate today!”

Aileen Kirkham, library volunteer and long-time donor

We’ve been associated with BGC for 15-20 years so it’s something we’re passionate about. Because of the pandemic there was no Spring Festival, and we knew you may not get as many donations at this time. We really like Spring Festival and we’re sad for the kids.

Frances and John Planchard

The Over the Hill Gang BBQ Team has been a part of Boys and Girls Country for over 40 years. We are proud of our relationship!

Mike O’Kelley, Over the Hill Gang BBQ Team

Congratulations to our Seniors!

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. Proverbs 16:3

The Boys and Girls Country family is extremely proud of our 10 high school graduates this year. This is an accomplishment many of them were not sure would become a reality prior to coming to BGC. Your support truly changes the trajectories of the lives of our children. Please pray for these young adults as they transition to the next phases of their lives. ❤️



Natalie

High school was so amazing! It definitely had its pros and cons, but it was a wonderful learning experience and I met great friends too. It is going to be hard to not have my friends nearby, but I am proud to have high school graduation under my belt. My educational goal is to go to Lone Star College for two years and then transfer to Texas State University. I want to study to become a physical therapist. I will miss my BGC family, especially going on cottage vacations together. Those are the best memories, and I would do it all again!

Mark

My freshman and senior year football seasons gave me a lot of great memories. I loved playing football and spending time with my friends. I was looking forward to graduation, and I was upset that the ceremony and the celebration did not happen traditionally. My goal for now is to get the basic courses done at Lone Star College and then transfer to a university. I would like to study architecture and work part-time at a retail store nearby. I will miss all the fun we had as a family and playing football together. BGC taught me to stay on top of my goals and not rely on teaching parents for everything.



Cameron

Although our senior year was not typical, it still went by very fast. I will miss the extracurricular activities and friends, but definitely not the stress of working on the best possible grades. I am very grateful to have received a scholarship to attend Rice University to pursue a degree in Digital Arts and Animation with an English Literature minor. I have always been passionate about art, and I think the opportunities for digital artists are plentiful. I hope to get into a work-study program or find an internship while at school. I will miss my cottage and our time together, especially playing in the gym with other cottages.



Clarisa

I could have never imagined that graduating from high school would be possible. I had a very interesting high school experience, and I will miss my teachers so much. Many people are upset that our graduation was not traditional, but I am just grateful to receive a diploma. I hope to work in a clothing store while pursuing higher education. My goal is to get into the nursing school at Lone Star College. BGC means a lot to me, and I am grateful for all the support I have received here. I will never forget the first time we went to the rodeo and basketball games together. We made so many great memories as a family here.

Marvin

I have been waiting for graduation since I started school because it always seemed impossible. I enjoyed my time in high school and made great friendships. The quarantine made things harder for all of us and made me miss my friends and teachers. I am looking forward to college and hopefully to doing some traveling. My goal is to go to Lone Star College to get the basic courses covered and then transfer to Texas State University to study social work. I want to do something important with my life. My greatest memory about BGC is sharing my story at the Heritage Award Dinner. I was anxious, but it felt amazing to share how God has brought me through major challenges.



Alex

Pep rallies and other activities will always stand out in my mind when I think about high school. Sadly, we did not get to experience the “end of school” things, and I will miss my friends. Graduation is a big deal for me, and I am excited for that achievement. I’m looking forward to independent living and taking a gap year. I am planning to continue my work at the day care and then apply to Prairie View A&M. I am interested in their nursing program. BGC has done so much for me. I will miss our talks on the cottage porch with all the girls. It was great to be able to build relationships with my teaching parents and cottage sisters; they are a great support system. I will never forget our trip to Corpus Christi and the first time I ever saw the beach.

Chris

My high school experience was stressful, but I am very excited to graduate. There was a lot of work that needed to be done remotely, and I am happy I was able to get it done. This is a huge achievement for me. I hope to apply the lessons I learned and join the workforce. I am very eager to work and become independent. I know that I do not have many skills right now, but I hope to get a job where I can grow my experience. I am very interested in the trade school programs that are offered at Lone Star College as well. I will miss my cottage family and making memories together. BGC taught me a lot of lessons that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.



Ethan

I had a great high school experience. I made a lot of new friends and also learned so many new and interesting things. I was able to find my passion for programming. I will miss hanging out with my friends in the mornings and during lunch, coding with my computer class and playing tennis with my teammates. I am going to school at Colorado College to double major in computer science and business with minors in Japanese and mathematics. I hope to be able to work part-time while going to school. My favorite memory at BGC is when we went to Caldwell together with Cottage 7. We played "capture the flag." One of the boys gave me the flag and helped put me in a tree. During the game, some of the other boys found me and tried to make me get down, but I refused and we won that game.



Alyssa

Graduation is a big milestone for me. I had been behind in school, but I was able to catch up to my grade and graduate with my peers. I will miss my teachers and all the friends I made. I plan to continue my education and work at the same time. I have been working towards a manager position at Papa John's, which will be a perfect job while in college. For now I am going to Lone Star College to get my basic courses done and then plan to transfer to Texas A&M. When I finish my education, I hope to work as a veterinarian. I will never forget how BGC changed my life. My fondest memory is when Esme (one of the girls in the cottage) taught me how to read the Bible, and now I really enjoy it.

Farid

My high school experience was interesting. I learned a lot about responsibility and how to disagree appropriately. People expect a lot more from you when you become an adult. I will miss football and the excitement of playing on our team. Some of my teachers made a huge impact on me, and I will miss talking to them. Although graduation was different for our class, I am excited to have a diploma. I plan to attend Sul Ross State University and study mathematics to become an architect. I hope to be able to play on their football team as well. BGC gave me a lot, and my teaching parents were very patient with me. I appreciate all they've done.



February 1 - May 31, 2020

In Memory Of

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

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*Includes gift(s) made to the Boys and Girls Country Endowment Fund

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Join us in Prayer

Friends, we are walking through unknown territory. It seems as if each day delivers another dose of anxiety or fear over basic things about which, until recently, we haven't had to worry. Boys and Girls Country cannot fulfill our mission alone, and we rely on God to guide us through the darkest times. We ask you to please pray for the children and young adults who call Boys and Girls Country home, that:

- Their physical, emotional and spiritual needs will be met;
- Our students will persevere through the tough adjustments to the new norm;
- Our teaching parents will continue being encouraged and strengthened to lead our children towards becoming self-sustaining and contributing adults;
- Our operations will be able to continue providing for the needs of the cottages and the donations will not subside.

We welcome your encouragements in the form of Facebook messages, emails to supportkids@boysandgirlscountry.org, physical letters, donations and even text messages. You can subscribe to receive short text updates from Boys and Girls Country by texting "BGC" to 22999 and reply back with anything you'd like to share.

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
Thank you for your gift to change the lives of our children!



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Fax: 281.351.4978

