MADISON MATTERS

The latest news and updates from Madison Square Boys & Girls Club

Although Madison has temporarily suspended all in-person programming, our presence in our communities has not wavered, and we continue to provide critical services.

EAT WELL, DO GOOD

Our swift response to COVID-19 entailed first taking every measure to ensure the safety of our members and to assess their needs, including coordinating a personal outreach program led by our Clubhouse Directors. These conversations revealed that food availability is a real need for our families. In response, we launched our food assistance program - Eat Well, Do Good— in partnership with our generous sponsors, including CC & Amber Sabathia, PitCCh In Foundation, Bronx Borough President, New York Yankees, and United Public Adjusters & Appraisers Inc. We have held food grab-and-go events weekly at all six of our Clubhouses with approximately 150 bags given out at each site every week. Each bag includes enough food for four meals for each family. During these events, families line up outside the
Clubhouse and are given a bag of food, consisting of fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, cereal, rice, pasta and gallons of water. We are focusing on providing nutritious ingredients to provide a healthy, home-cooked meal. To promote this service, Club staff called, emailed, and sent text messages to parents. In addition, Madison partnered with local community boards to help spread the message. Seeing the faces of those affected by this pandemic and being able to counteract the food insecurity in the neighborhoods in which our Clubhouses reside is one way that we can do better and make a difference for our communities. In a time of so much uncertainty and forced distancing, the food pantry is one small way that Madison is able to provide some relief and facilitate safe in-person contact with our families. One parent said “The pantry support meant a lot to my family and I. We are saying thank you so much for having our back. This pandemic shall pass and we will not pass with it. You are our hero, we love you!” Another Madison parent stated that she is so grateful for the support with food assistance because she doesn’t know what she would do without it. We are more than our Clubhouses. We are a Madison family. And when times get hard, families take care of one another.
Since April 1, Madison has pivoted from the physical Club to our Virtual Afterschool Program (VAP). VAP began with an academic support room, teen lounge, and arts and recreation room. After building momentum with our initial programs, we are continuing to introduce enhanced activities and services to our programming. Partners like Empire BlueCross Blue Shield are providing support to help make this happen. These programs are a crucial part of our efforts to ensure a continuum of care even while Clubs are closed, keep young people connected to staff and mentors, bring routine to their days, and ensure continued learning and development.

Our vision—every member leaves the Club academically ready, a leader, fit and healthy, a high-school graduate with short and long term goals for future success—has not changed due to COVID-19. While Madison continues to focus on supporting members’ education, we know that children are getting antsy from sitting in front of a screen all day and need physical and creative outlets to break up their day.

With the support of Empire BlueCross Blue Shield, Madison was able to introduce a number of exciting activities, including a weekly Club-wide fitness event.
led by a professional personal trainer and exciting musical nights with leading DJs. These are highlights of our members’ week! In addition, with Empire’s partnerships, we are running two virtual contests centered on the arts and healthy lifestyles. The first contest is the Healthy Cypher Contest. This contest aims to promote physical activity by inviting members to learn a fun exercise and create an original song, poem, rap, or spoken word about the exercise. The next contest is the Mix It Up Cooking Demonstration. This activity will have our members watch a video about healthy eating. Members will then have to take what they’ve learned and submit and cook a recipe. The top two recipes will be remade by chefs and the tasting will be judged live. Five winners are going to be chosen for each contest and will receive an Apple iPad or gift card! We know these fun contests will go a long way in inspiring and educating our youth and their families to make healthy choices and lead a healthy lifestyle!

A Madison parent stated that her daughter loves the VAP, because members are always doing fun and creative things. These new initiatives are just one more step that we are taking to ensure that we can keep our members engaged with new opportunities thanks to our wonderful partners.
We are committed to helping our Madison families in any way that we can. While we aim to provide physical support through our food assistance events, we also understand the importance of providing emotional support, which we are doing by conducting wellness check-in calls and virtual parent meetings. The virtual parent meetings occur on a bi-monthly basis and provide an opportunity for parents to connect with each other, express their needs and concerns, and hear updates on Madison’s programming and operations. The first meeting was very well-received and
aimed to further explain our Virtual Afterschool Programming, introduce the Clubhouse Directors to those who have not met them, and learn about the exciting Empire BlueCross BlueShield sponsored events. The calls have been well received by parents who are enduring so much stress and emotion in light of the crisis. Mobi, parent of a Navy Yard member, said “We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to our Madison family. It meant a lot to us to see all our children’s mentors and staff come out to support members and our community in this unprecedented time of COVID-19.”