Madison’s Class of 2020 is on their way toward success! We held a virtual graduation to celebrate our graduates and guess who showed up? Shaquille O’Neal! We are so proud of all of our participants in our Project Graduate Program and College Success Initiative who are fulfilling their dreams and paving the way for younger members to graduate high school and pursue higher education. Congratulations to all Class of 2020 Madison graduates!

**MADISON’S COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS**

As this year continues to challenge us in ways we never imagined, we’ve noticed those around us are becoming more and more aware of the immense inequalities that exist in under-resourced communities across the country. For 136 years, with the support of incredible individuals, organizations, friends, and family, Madison has worked to combat these gaps through our Priority Outcome areas: Academic Success, Good Character & Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles. Madison has remained a trusted source of support and aid for our members and families, but we continue to look ahead to how we can better serve our communities. You can read more about our commitment to progress at the Clubs here.
We continue to work hard to create positive, productive, and open environments where our members feel like they can be heard. Recently, our teens in particular raised their voices seeking a forum to express themselves and collaborate on ways that they can channel their frustration and fear into action. In response, our staff hosted virtual Town Hall meetings for our teens. During these meetings, members expressed their distress about not feeling heard, fear, and helplessness in being able to enact change. During the final weeks of our virtual programming (VAP) sessions, we wanted to close with a sense of hope. In the spirit of supporting a sense of leadership and activism, we asked the teens to share one positive thing that they would like to do to have an impact. It could range from helping their younger sibling understand what’s happening to writing a letter to a local politician. Then, members came together to create a newspaper/magazine to show a snapshot of the future that the teens are hoping for. They used their creativity and drew, painted or wrote something positive about the type of world they want to see and how they can have an impact. The final products included a powerful poem and artwork that depicts a hopeful future.
SMILOW TEENS ARE THE FUTURE

Our country land of the free home of the brave. We are brave enough to say why is my skin color used as fear?? Our country land of the free home of the brave. We are brave enough to march, to say to demand, to be treated as a human beings.
At Madison, our goal is to ensure all of our members have the skills needed to graduate from high school and be well-prepared for life and work. We believe that all youth deserve the opportunity to achieve their highest potential and that giving them the opportunity to explore college and career paths is essential to helping them prepare for their transition into adulthood. We thus launched a comprehensive workforce development program to offer teens deliberate and compelling opportunities to explore different career trajectories, understand what the path entails and what is needed to prepare, and support them in developing the skills and tools they need to be competitive in the workplace. These opportunities—paired with mentoring—bolster our members’ chances of graduating high-school and finding a career path that resonates with their interests and abilities.

We are proud to announce that we will be running two teen employment programs this year! These include the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and our very own Employment program – totaling 130 participants. Madison developed the Madison Summer Employment Program in response to the pandemic and the lack of opportunities for teens to work during the summer like they normally would.
The Madison Summer Employment Program will consist of 30 teens who will engage in career-readiness training and community-based projects. In addition, Madison will serve as a host for the SYEP program operating out of our Pinkerton Clubhouse with participants being recruited from the Polo Grounds housing complex across the street from the Club. These youth will partake in virtual training that will help them develop essential workplace skills and will complete project-based learning experiences focused on food distribution. All teens will earn stipends for their time.

As part of our workforce development initiative, American Express held a virtual college and career panel discussion for our high school juniors, seniors, and alumni in college. The panel explored college readiness and potential career paths and included executives with experience across business development, product management, community development and engagement, and financial analysis. The panelists each provided a quick overview of his/her education and career journey. The panelists each answered a few questions before turning it over to participants to ask questions. The event lasted 90 minutes and was well-received by participants. We will be holding several of these events throughout the year to enable our members to focus on their futures. We are excited to harness our partnership with American Express to help spark interest and shine a light on college experiences and on career opportunities that are often unseen by young people. Thank you for partnering with us!
In addition to the Board of Trustees, Madison is so grateful to have a dedicated and energetic Bronx Board of Managers, who focus on supporting our two Bronx Clubs. Members include: Frank Capaccio, Jr. – Bronx Board President, Josette Balestrieri, Robert Brown, Lenny Caro, John Emrick, Janae Henderson, Derrick Lovett, Javier Maldonado, Philip Maltaghati, Armand Paganelli, Roger Paganelli, Joanna Pawlowska, and Steven Rivera.

Each year, the Bronx Board hosts their signature event—the Bronx Grand Gala—a night of dinner, dancing and celebration of our youth—to raise critical funds for the John E. Grimm III and Joel E. Smilow Clubhouses. Due to COVID-19, this event, along with many of our other events, have had to pivot to a virtual experience. On June 11th the Bronx Gala transformed to a live virtual event, which included pre-recorded performances by our dance troupes, a speech from our Youth of the Year, Kemoy, live conversations with CC & Amber Sabathia, and an update from our former Youths of the Year Grace and Aieyla, in addition to a message from Executive Director Tim McChristian. Armand Paganelli, a Bronx Board member, emceed the event from home and did a fantastic job!
This year, the event raised over $75,000 – the most we raised in over 6 years! The proceeds from this event went towards operating costs for our Food Pantry initiative. Food availability is a real need for our families. In response to this need, 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. We are focusing on providing nutritious ingredients to provide a healthy, home cooked meal. 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.

We are so appreciative of everyone who contributed to make the Bronx Gala such a success and empower us to continue to serve the youth in the Bronx who need us most – thank you for your support!