Club Fun, our summer program, just ended, and we are excited to recap highlights from the unique summer experience at our Clubhouses! While we had to alter our traditional Clubhouse model to follow safety and social distancing guidelines, we are grateful and proud to have been able to offer Club Fun at no cost to our members! In addition, we know that having the structure of going to the Clubs every day provided members with a sense of normalcy in the midst of an uncertain and challenging time, for which our families were deeply appreciative.

During the first few days of our summer program we dedicated time to teaching and reminding our members of COVID-19 hygiene best practices, including how to properly wear a mask, wash hands, and social distance, etc., preparing them for interactions
both inside and outside of the Clubs. While we were disappointed we couldn’t welcome as many members as we normally do during the summer, reducing capacity allowed us to go deeper with program components. We continued to focus on our three priority outcome areas – Academic Success, Healthy Lifestyles, and Good Character & Citizenship.

**Academic Success**

As always, summer is a critical time to engage youth in enriching educational activities that bolster lessons learned during the school year. During summer, most youth lose about two months’ equivalent of math skills, but low-income youth—Madison’s members—also lose more than two months’ equivalent of reading skills. We are grateful to have been able to offer a variety of academic lessons and activities to help reinforce our members’ literacy and math skills and reduce the effects of the summer slide. As part of our academic programming, we worked with our corporate and individual volunteers to put a fresh spin on our Big Red Chair opportunity. Through this program, volunteers read a book of their choice to our members and lead them in a follow-up discussion. This summer, our Big Red Chair readers participated virtually through Zoom with great success.

One academic highlight from the summer was engaging members in a “slime-y” approach to STEM learning. Members of our Joel E. Smilow Clubhouse created magnetic slime while members from our Navy Yard Clubhouse created special slime. This was done in partnership with the Garden of Dreams Foundation as part of the Foundation’s Summer Scenes virtual program. Madison felt lucky to be able to utilize the latest technology and curricula, our expertise in building fun, collaborative learning environments, and talented staff, to introduce a multitude of concepts and tools that span the STEM disciplines and encourage exploration and discovery.
Healthy Lifestyles

While our Healthy Lifestyles program typically includes physical fitness and activities, our Clubs used their creativity to keep members interested in healthy habits while maintaining social-distancing. Clubs shifted to an approach that included high-yield activities for youth health and wellness education. In the communities we serve, youth have little access to sports programs, nutritional counseling and oftentimes positive role models. Helping youth adopt constructive behaviors and attitudes toward health is one of our core objectives as an organization, because we know that habits form early in life and are difficult to change once they become ingrained. Some of our favorite Clubhouse activities included members learning about a balanced diet, creating their own “perfect plate,” creating their own cereal boxes, plus more!
Good Character & Citizenship

With November on the horizon, our members learned about the importance of voting and the process of electing officials at the community, state, and country levels. To gain a better understanding of the political process, members from our Thomas S. Murphy Clubhouse participated in a mock election. A few members ran for President while others focused on voter registration. The purpose of the mock election was to help our young people understand the importance of voting, practice public speaking, and gain valuable leadership skills. David, the Club member who “won” the election, said “I will make the right choices when choices need to be made. I am clever, considerate, dedicated, and honest. This is what I think a President should be.” Madison’s Character and Leadership Development programs offer our members community service and educational opportunities to inspire strong character development, instill a sense of personal and communal responsibility, foster tolerance and respect for others, and help members build effective strategies for responding to conflict. Our members emerge from their participation in these projects, more confident, self-aware, empathetic, and motivated to lead. As is with all of our programs, our goal is to mold future generations that demonstrate civility, tolerance and compassion for each other.
Hunger stops here! Our Food Pantry program continues to serve as a critical resource to our members, their families, and the communities we serve. With the help of our partners, like Carver Bank, we have been able to continue operating our Food Pantry program at all of our Clubhouses on a weekly basis. Carver Bank sponsored our Food Pantry program at each of our sites across Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Harlem the week of August 2nd. Since our new Food Pantry program launched during the pandemic, we have distributed more than 13,500 bags to individual families filled with fresh and non-perishable foods. Thank you to everyone from Carver who came out to take part in this initiative.

In addition to fighting food insecurity through our Food Pantry program, we are excited to have joined the community fridge program that has been tackling food injustice and waste in New York City. Organizers of this program installed a community refrigerator outside our Pinkerton Clubhouse on 155th Street and Bradhurst Ave. in Harlem at the beginning of August. The refrigerator is stocked daily with fresh local healthy food and provides an anonymous, free way for residents to get the help they need. This is part of a larger initiative through which refrigerators have been placed in each of the 5 boroughs and have all been very successful. Local
restaurants and stores donate unused or unsold food instead of throwing them away. This not only helps to feed our communities but also helps reduce food waste. According to The New York Times, 1 in every 4 New Yorkers are food insecure - even before the pandemic. We are proud to join the movement and our goal is to eventually bring this to our other Clubhouses. While our Food Pantry program is happening weekly, the community refrigerator gives the community an opportunity to have access to healthy food on a daily basis.
Our Youth of the Year Kemoy Hutchinson has had a whirlwind of a year. Earlier this year, he was chosen to represent Madison in the New York State Youth of the Year competition. Kemoy competed virtual and had a lot to say about his experience and Madison.

Q: How has Madison impacted you?
A: Madison has, quite literally, helped build my future. Almost everything I've experienced was only done through the opportunities I received while attending the Boys and Girls Club. Because of skills and talents I developed while attending the club, I excelled in all areas of my schooling (academic and extracurricular).

Now, I feel more than prepared for the things ahead of me.

Q: What is the biggest lesson that you’ll take away from your years at the Club?
A: My years at the club have taught me that not everything is “too good to be true.” I remember a lot of times when I was presented with opportunities from school, the club, and wherever that I thought I wasn’t good enough to be doing, or that I didn’t deserve it. That mindset held me back from accomplishing and experiencing quite a lot, but the club is where I learned that confidence in myself will take me farther than anyone else’s confidence in me.

Q: What are your plans for the Fall?
A: I’ll be a freshman again in the fall. But this time, I’ll be a student at Stony Brook University.
Q: Can you talk about your experience in the recent New York State Youth of the Year competition?
A: I have never done anything like the NYS YOY competition before. It was really different, but it was an exciting experience. It was nice to see so many youth like myself, trying to make their own impact. I'm also grateful for all of Mr. Simba McCray's and Ms. Sparkle Joyner's unparalleled help and support that they gave all of Murphy's candidates from the very beginning, and continue to give us today. To be completely honest, I never imagined that I'd even come this far. In the beginning, I was weary of even making it at my local club. I didn't have much confidence in my speech because I didn't believe it was as compelling as the other candidates'. I soon realized, however, that a speech is only as compelling as who delivers it. The competition helped me to hone skills I didn't realize I had, and if I could run for YOY again I would do it without hesitation.

Q: What was something that you learned about yourself from participating in the YOY experience?
A: Being a member of Madison Square Boys and Girls Club, as well as the 2020 YOY, only gave me a glimpse of how much I'm capable of and I won't stop becoming a better me.

Q: How has COVID-19 impacted your plans and your family?
A: COVID-19 really took a toll on the end of my senior year of high school. The immediate change from in-person to online learning was in no way easy for me and the rest of my family. At the start of my online learning experience, I was faced with a lack of resources (technology, learning material, etc.) that made it very difficult for me to do the work that was being provided. By the time my school produced a way for us to get the technology we needed a lot of work had already passed. So it was even harder for me to catch up and stay on track, and it reflected on my final grades. My family was also subject to working and learning from home, so it took us some time to find spaces to become comfortable to do what we needed to.

The Coronavirus has also negated a lot of my expectations for college in the fall. Although I still have plans to dorm, COVID-19 has made my college transition quite the struggle. As expected, many new rules and regulations were put in place due to the virus, and many of my peers have strong doubts that college (at least our freshman year) will feel like it should. But I won’t let myself become adjusted to that mindset. I am going to make the best out of whatever I experience, Coronavirus or
Q: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
A: In 10 years, I see myself with my Master’s Degree in Marine Sciences, already delved into my career as a marine biologist and doing my best to save and preserve marine life. I also see myself still heavily involved in music and singing. They’re a big part of who I am, and I can’t see a future for myself without them.

Q: What is one piece of advice that you would’ve liked to give to young Kemoy that you can now give to other younger members?
A: I have this motto for myself now that I wish I had developed much earlier: If the shoe fits, get a size bigger. I wish the young me would have learned to step out of his comfort zone more often—it might take a lot to do it, but it isn’t hard or impossible. I want younger members to never get complacent with where they are. There is always a higher step to climb, and the only way they can surmount that step is by taking the limits society places on them and putting in the work. Sometimes you have to take that risk, or be the odd one out... and that’s okay. As long as you never get too comfortable with just doing the bare minimum.

Q: What are you looking forward to about college? What are you afraid of?
A: I am mostly looking forward to the new connections, friends, and memories that I’ll create, the new steps that I’ll take towards my career, as well as the new freedom that I’ll have. I’ve been looking forward to college, especially Stony Brook, for a while now. The fact that it’s finally here has me beyond ecstatic. The only thing I’m afraid of is COVID-19 taking away more from my college experience than it already has. That being said, I won’t allow this pandemic, or anyone for that matter, to become a setback for me. I will make the best out of this new part of my life.

Congrats Kemoy! We are so proud of you and excited to follow you on your journey toward success!
While the holidays may seem far away, Christmas happened early for some of our members! Our members recently received presents for our Christmas in July program which happens annually during the fourth week of July. This initiative was created as a tradition to brighten our members’ summer and provide them with a small gift for their outstanding commitment to success. In that spirit, we’re excited to share that our 54th Annual Christmas Tree Ball, scheduled for Friday, December 4th, is coming soon. More details to come regarding event info, virtual details, and more!