



Locally and nationally, Boys Town is working to identify appropriate strategies to ensure our organization shifts to implement positive change. **Four key areas include:**

Boys Town Louisiana Stands Up Against Racism

While racial equity rests at the core of who we are and what we do; we live in a society in which our youth are far too often treated differently based upon the color of their skin. **Black lives matter.**

As an organization, Boys Town Louisiana stands up against systemic racism. We condemn racial inequity, and we do not accept our current programs, systems and policies are the very best that we can do. We can and will do better and this includes challenging our own beliefs, values and constructs. Our youth deserve better and they will be at the center of how we evolve to become an explicitly anti-racist organization.

To read our full statement, please visit boystown.org/louisiana. In addition, on our website, we have listed several learning tools and parenting resources on this topic.

1. Strategic Youth and Family Engagement:

Deepening how we engage youth and families to understand lived experiences and solutions to advance racial equity and justice; and provide transparent accountability.

2. Evaluating Our Program Model:

Assessing program models to understand the impact of programming in advancing racial equity and providing culturally relevant services; and utilizing findings to meaningfully transform programs.

3. Diversifying Our Workforce:

Utilize current workforce baselines to set goals to increase racial diversity at the board and staff level to include top leadership.

4. Transforming Our Culture:

Creating systems, practices, resources and forums to learn and lead together.

Spotlight on: COVID Challenges

EHS Team Ensures Critical Learning Despite COVID Challenges

When the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools and early-childhood centers in March, Boys Town Louisiana's Early Head Start Program had to quickly adapt its model to make sure our 168 infants and toddlers (0-3 years of age) could finish the school year outside of the classroom.

Nicole Grace-Franklin, Education & Disabilities Coordinator for Boys Town Louisiana's Early Head Start Program, has worked with colleagues to develop creative strategies to keep learning opportunities possible, despite school closures. The EHS Center Partners have created YouTube channels for weekly educational videos. Each one also holds weekly live sessions via Zoom. The Boys Town Education team creates and distributes weekly lesson plans for center staff to follow. These lesson plans include activities for parents to do at home. Boys Town also distributed packets of educational activities that included crayons, markers, Play-Doh, construction paper, glue sticks, chalk, and books, in addition to monthly care packages with household essentials. It's a massive effort.



While these efforts have allowed many of our students to continue learning outside of the classroom environment, technology access continues to be a major barrier for some families. According to Melissa Wetzel, also an Education & Disabilities Coordinator for the program, "Many of our families either don't have or don't have enough devices for virtual education." Due to the economic downturn caused by the pandemic locally, a staggering 50% of our New Orleans EHS parents faced sudden unemployment. In addition to the financial strain, "the older siblings' education takes priority over our younger EHS children when accessing technology for education," Wetzel said. Boys Town is working individually with each family to identify technology solutions and offer learning resources not solely dependent on technology.



While everyone hopes that students can return to the classroom this fall for a new school year, Boys Town is prepared to continue virtually. The teacher pre-service week, ahead of the new school year, will be presented 100% virtually and will include additional training on health and safety protocols. Bi-annual home visits with families will be held virtually as well. All EHS learning centers will continue to create weekly instructional videos, even if centers are open, to benefit any children on the growing EHS waitlist who cannot be enrolled given space limitations.



To learn how you can help contribute to the EHS program, please email julia.turkevich@boystown.org or call 504-293-7907.





THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS COMMUNITY

Our community has offered an amazing amount of support to ensure that families and youth are helped through this challenging pandemic. Special thanks to some of the individuals and organizations that have gone above and beyond:

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Thanks to **T-Mobile** for a generous donation of tablets and hotspots to our Family Home Program (FH) and Intervention & Assessment Center (I&A). This gift enabled our young men to wrap up the school year, while learning from home.

Another important component to staying home was ensuring safety for all youth and staff in our care. Thank you to **CA Souls** for donating reusable face coverings for us to use and do our part to flatten the curve.

The transition to being home 24/7 proved to be extra demanding for our direct youth care staff. One of their exhausting and never-ending needs was cooking 3 meals a day for 6-15 hungry teenagers! Thankfully our community partners, the **St. Catherine of Siena Women's Club** and **Dooky Chase's Restaurant**, stepped up to relieve some of this stress. These groups, in addition to **Lori Rockett, Cleo Wade, Lily Ngo, and Tony Biancosino**,

committed to delivering meals to our residential programs once a week during the pandemic.

Another need that became apparent was entertainment; normally our residential youth would be visiting museums, going to day camps, and playing sports outside all summer. With closures due to COVID-19 and government advisories to stay inside, the **15 White Coats** teamed up with the **Drive and Dish Foundation** to donate basketball hoops for FH and I&A so our youth can stay active. They also generously donated hoops to several families in Boys Town's Care Coordination program.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Over 70 families in our Care Coordination, In-Home Family Services, and Early Head Start (EHS) programs received donations of cleaning supplies and essential goods from generous community members, including **Swanson Insurance Company, Gazebo Cafe, Jamelle Lacey, High Voltage Youth Camp** and **Be Loud Studios**. Special thanks to **New Orleans Councilmember Cyndi Nguyen**.

Additionally, Boys Town supporters answered the call to help 168 EHS families in need of support. We collected nonperishable foods, diapers, baby clothes, bathing basins, and car seats. Special thanks to **Louise Cook, Keyana Stewart**, and the **Junior League of New Orleans** for helping these parents and their babies!

We'd also like to thank parents and program alumni, **Lily Ngo** and **Keyana Stewart**, who have both contributed to these emergency relief efforts. Boys Town once gave them opportunities to get back on their feet, and now they are paying it forward to families who are in the same boat. When you invest in Boys Town Louisiana, you help families find hope.

Special thanks to the following organizations that have provided emergency financial support to Boys Town Louisiana during the COVID-19 pandemic: **Pfizer Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana** and **The Kresge Foundation**.

3
Meals a Day for
6-15
Teenagers

168
EHS Families
Served



Success Spotlight: Dwayne & Darius

Dwayne and Darius were juniors in high school when they were referred to Boys Town Louisiana. Between anger issues, school absenteeism, and entanglement in the juvenile justice system, Mom didn't know what to do. Boys Town's In-Home Family Services & Care Coordination consultants helped them set goals, navigate emotional and behavioral issues, and get the twins back on track to graduate with their classmates in 2020.

To read more about their story, including their plans for the future, visit boystown.org/louisiana.

New Board Member Joins Boys Town Louisiana's Leadership

Dr. Lana Joseph-Ford
FOUNDER & CEO, HIGH LEVEL
SPEECH AND HEARING CENTER
New Orleans, LA



For more great stories, visit

BOYSTOWN.ORG/LOUISIANA

For 30 years, Boys Town Louisiana has positively impacted and changed the lives of thousands of children and families through its transformative care and services. Boys Town believes today, as our founder Father Edward Flanagan did over 100 years ago, that every child deserves a future, every family deserves to stay together, and every community deserves to thrive. Boys Town offers hope. But we offer hope as more than just an abstract concept; we substantiate it with programs and solutions grounded in our deep experience and supported by our decades of research.

Since opening in 1989, Boys Town Louisiana has focused on meeting the needs of youth and families through a variety of programs and services. We have continued to expand our services, and now serve 7,600 children and families in Louisiana each year.



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