

**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF THE VALLEY, TERROS HEALTH TEAM UP WITH PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE
PARTNERS TO PROVIDE FREE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES TO VALLEY YOUTH**

Whole Child Approach Program To Alleviate Pandemic-Induced Social and Emotional Stress

PHOENIX (October 19, 2022) – Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley and Terros Health will provide free behavioral health services to youth at a time when they need it most, thanks to a collaboration between the Arizona Department of Education and three Arizona-based private foundations – The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation, the Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation, and Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust.

The “Whole Child Approach” Program will help alleviate social and emotional stress among children and teens between the ages of 5-18 in Boys & Girls Clubs in Maricopa and Pinal counties who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

“Our Club members face so many barriers to accessing much-needed behavioral health services including transportation, financial and cultural stigma challenges. Bringing these services right into the Clubs, where we can use proven prevention and intervention services, will help thousands of youth who need it most,” said Marcia Mintz, president and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley.

Mintz said the three-year pilot program will serve youth in primarily under-represented communities, as well as students at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system or with an incarcerated parent. Additional emphasis will be placed on those under the supervision of the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) and families experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

The Whole Child Approach program is made possible through a visionary public-private partnership led by the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley. The \$9 million total program cost is being partially funded by a \$3 million grant from the Arizona Department of Education as part of the American Rescue Plan. The additional \$6 million will come from investments from the three philanthropic foundations.

“The Arizona Department of Education is proud to partner with Boys & Girls Club of the Valley on this innovative public-private behavioral health partnership,” said Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman. “We know helping our state’s students recover from the pandemic will take a whole-community effort, one that Boys & Girls Clubs are well-prepared to support. Organizations like Boys & Girls Club and their philanthropic partners are deeply embedded and trusted in the communities they serve, making them excellent partners in our state’s recovery efforts,” Kathy Hoffman, Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction, Arizona Department of Education.

“Bringing together funders from the State and local foundations at this scale is nearly unprecedented,” said Mintz of the partnership, “and a testament to our partners’ enduring commitment to youth in our community.” This program builds on the success of another pilot partnership with Bayless Health, funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona and Chandler Compadres. The effect of having Wellness Coaches in the Clubs improved Club climate, staff morale and safety, and had a positive impact on youth and teens. This expanded program will bring true behavioral health into Clubs, daily.

Beginning this fall, Terros Health will embed behavioral health coaches into 10 of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley's Clubs. Each year, the program will expand until it's running in all 30 Clubs. Terros staff members will work to assess the mental and physical health of children and youth. This will be accomplished through interaction with their peers, age-appropriate games, and other activities that promote recovery and teach youth developmental skills that reinforce their success in school, work and life using evidence-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula.

"This is a way to identify the challenges our kids are experiencing without judgment or stigma," said Dr. Karen Tepper, president and CEO of Terros Health. The behavioral health specialists will use a variety of therapeutic interventions, including mindfulness activities to help kids manage their emotions, along with art therapy and life skills training. The team will recommend additional treatment for youth, as needed. "The idea is to fill in the gaps for mental health services and improve access to treatment."

"Renee and I believe that breaking down barriers and helping change the conversation around mental health is absolutely essential," said Bob Parsons, co-founder of The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation. "Today, kids need hope and an easier way to access help. That's why this Boys & Girls Club program, which brings care directly to kids through everyday activities, is a game-changer."

The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation stepped up first as a partner for this large-scale mental health program. Reaching youth and teens in a familiar setting, without taking them from school or putting them in a clinical setting, is one unique aspect of the Whole Child Approach.

"Mental illness is unrelenting, deceptive, and convincing. Our youth are fraught and it is absolutely imperative that we come together as a community to support and strengthen their mental health and well-being," said Mary Jane Rynd, president and CEO of Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust. "The lasting effects of childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences not only impact mental and physical health, but also educational outcomes, economic stability, and generational health and welfare. This comprehensive partnership between Boys and Girls Clubs of the Valley and Terros Health is exactly the type of 'meet them where they are' approach that must be implemented with urgency."

Tom Egan, Executive Director of the Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation explained their investment, "The Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation focuses on addressing the imperatives around education and health services. We are proud to invest in this important public-private partnership, especially at a time when we know that so many young people are struggling with mental health challenges. Providing easier access to services on a regular basis will improve the climate of Clubs and the outcomes for youth who, in the past would not have had access to these needed services."

Nationally and locally, there has been a surge in depression, anxiety, substance use, and thoughts of suicide among youth. The problem became so acute that the U.S. Surgeon General issued a rare public health advisory last December.

In its 2021 State of Mental Health in America report, Mental Health America noted that youth between the ages of 11 and 17 were more likely than any other age group to experience moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression. The report also found that nationwide, 60% of youth with

depression do not receive mental health treatment, even in states with the greatest access to care.

Arizona ranks nearly last (49th) in the nation for high prevalence of mental illness and a severe lack of access to behavioral health care for youth.

In addition:

- Arizona ranks fourth in the nation in the school dropout rate, based on data from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Based on the Arizona Department of Health Services' 2021 *Adverse Childhood Experiences in Arizona* report, Arizona had a higher prevalence of ACEs in all nine ACEs assessed in the National Survey on Children's Health (NSCH) compared to the national prevalence. Arizona children on average have higher ACE scores than the national average with 21.9% of Arizona children having experienced two or more ACEs. The national average is 18.6%.
- One in three Arizona households has experienced food insecurity since the pandemic began, according to an Arizona State University study in 2020.
- Arizona lags the rest of the nation in affordable housing. A 2020 point-in-time homeless count in Maricopa County revealed that 16% of the affected population were children between the ages of 0-17.
- Child abuse calls in Arizona are up 10% compared to this time last year, according to the Arizona Department of Child Safety. The agency reported 22,265 cases of child abuse and neglect from January to June 2021, resulting in 14,461 placements into out-of-home care.

In tracking the nearly 13,000 youth between the ages of 5 and 18 served in 2020, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley found that 54% lived in a single-parent home, 56% participated in the National School Lunch Program to receive free or a reduced-cost meal; and 9% were either homeless or living in unsecure housing situations. Just over 10% of these families and youth reported experiencing mental health challenges but did not have private or other insurance to cover the cost of care.

“COVID-19 took a grave toll on our youth and their families,” Mintz said. “Our Whole Child Approach Program is designed with these individuals in mind – to help them on a path to total well-being.”

About Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley offers affordable after-school and summer programs for more than 20,000 young people in grades K-12. At 30 Clubs across Arizona, BGCAZ provides award-winning programs designed to change the lives of young people. For more than 75 years, BGCAZ has been creating equity and opportunity for youth through academic, social, and workforce opportunities. We help young people make healthy decisions and focus on social and emotional development to build resilient young adults. Most importantly, we work to develop strong character and leadership skills by creating positive connections with caring adults and their communities. For more information, visit bgcaz.org or on social channels at @BGCArizona.

About Terros Health

Terros Health is an integrated healthcare company focused on the whole person, providing primary care and specializing in mental health and substance use treatment for more than 50 years. Through its 11 health and counseling centers throughout the state, Terros Health provides trauma-informed mental health, primary care, substance use recovery, and crisis interventions to help individuals become the best version of themselves. This includes using a groundbreaking integrated model of care to treat individuals' physical and mental health conditions as one. For more information, visit terroshealth.org.