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HEALTH

## Glendale Boys & Girls branch among first to participate in new behavioral health program

‘Whole Child Approach’ will alleviate pandemic-induced social, emotional stress



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(BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS, COURTESY)

There are almost 22,000 Boys & Girls Club members across the Valley as of June of this year.

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Posted Wednesday, November 30, 2022 1:35 pm



**By Steve Stockmar** ([/browse.html?byline=Steve%20Stockmar](#))

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Kept home during the early days of the COVID pandemic for their safety, kids are facing a new need.

Trends show that kids are trying to make up social and emotional shortcomings fueled by isolation during lockdown.

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. More locally, 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 more than 22,000 cases of child abuse and neglect from January to June 2021, resulting in over 14,000 placements into out-of-home care.

“In my personal and professional opinion, (kindergarten through first-grade students) probably have the most challenges coming up in the next four to five years,” said Eric Watkins, branch director at the Swift Kids Branch of Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley, located at 6420 W. Maryland Ave., in Glendale. Watkins has served at the Swift branch for five years, which includes before and after the pandemic.

“The older kids — teens — their two years of missing out were some of those key teens transitional periods: first dances at the school, the football games; those larger socialization events, as well as ‘hey let’s go hang out at the mall.’”

To approach this issue, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley, partnering with Terros Health, will provide behavioral health interventions and social-emotional learning programs to alleviate stress among youth in local Clubs. There are almost 22,000 Club members across the Valley as of June of this year, 46% of whom live below the poverty level, according to the organization.

The new program, “Whole Child Approach,” is made possible through a funding 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 Swift branch is among the first to participate in the three-year pilot program, which hopes to expand to 10 total Clubs by the end of 2023 and, eventually, to all 30 Clubs. Behavioral health technicians and therapists will be available to the branches to help alleviate social and emotional stress among children and teens disproportionately impacted by COVID.

Additional emphasis will be placed on those under the supervision of the Arizona Department of Child Safety and families experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

“I saw what being in isolation looked like,” said Silvia Chavez, Whole Child Approach program administrator with Boys & Girls Club, who also has a professional background in foster care, social work, education and homeless services. “Our families who are doubled up who don’t really have their own Wi-Fi. That is what we’re looking at, and in particular what we see here in the Club. Our Clubs are in communities of need, (and) lower-income communities.”

The additional help will involve on-site wellness coaches offering therapeutic and mental health interventions to Club members through programs teaching developmental skills. The consultants also can help identify academic needs and any potential learning deficits in order to connect the kids to appropriate resources.

“It’s about creating a trauma-informed environment in each of the Clubs that we’re integrating into,” explained Jessica Stelfox, Terros Health clinical manager.

According to Chavez, the current wait list for behavioral health services for any youth is about two months.

“Having them here (at the Clubs) and integrating Terros in here, if there is a youth that is going to need services, their wellness coaches are going to be able to pull parents aside privately and have a discussion with them about what they’re seeing and then offering the services,” Chavez said.



(/uploads/original/20221130-131932-boys & girls club2.jpg)

Notably, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley never shut down during COVID, although some families opted not to send kids to protect their health. But those are among the kids, Chavez added, who were further isolated and are now showing a need for an “additional layer of support.”

“Seeing kids who were isolated from their peers, from different socio-economic statuses — that’s kind of where we’re coming from,” she said.

Watkins says he’s also seeing more kids who were home-schooled previously, but now are acclimating to the school system and care, like the Boys & Girls Clubs, since their parents had to land extra jobs during the day post-pandemic to provide more income.

“The routine is a whole lot different,” he said. “You get kids who want to make friends but don’t have the skill set on how to make friends or how to keep friends. Some of the kids have trust issues, kids who have self-esteem issues, kids who are facing bullying issues, or kids who are being a bully.”

The \$9 million Whole Child Approach 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 Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation, the Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation, and Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust.

Glendale is also home to the Louis & Elizabeth Sands Boys & Girls Club Branch, at 4730 W. Grovers Ave.



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## Keywords

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley, Arizona, Glendale, Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation, the Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation, Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, Terros Health

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**Scottsdale Council to consider residential component of 94 Hundred Shea** (/stories/scottsdale-council-to-consider-residential-component-of-94-hundred-shea,346733)

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## Valley turns into buyer's market for first time since 2010

By Brent Haffner  
Phoenix housing market has glided into a buyer's market for the first time in 12 years, according to Tina Tambore of the CoreLogic Report.  
Tambore, a housing analyst in Phoenix, said sellers who don't have to sell are hanging tight right now and not putting their homes on the market. November marked the latest number of new listings ever recorded for this time of year, Tambore said.  
\* See Housing on page 18

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## Ducey pressed for school spending decision

By Howard Fischer  
Phoenix — Arizona's governor, Doug Ducey, is pressing lawmakers to decide whether to raise the cap on school spending at the end of the year. Hanging in the balance is whether schools are going to have to cut nearly 18% of their budgets before July 1. Rep. Michael Uhlir, D-Mesa, who chairs the House Education Committee, said Thursday that lawmakers opposed a \$1-billion increase in funding this past session for K-12 education. Only thing is, that new money bumps total state and local education funding against a \$100 voter-approved cap in school spending. Adjusted for inflation and student growth, that limit now is \$6.4 billion. But school districts already have prepared budgets and are on target to spend nearly \$7.5 billion this fiscal year based on the funding lawmakers approved. Lawmakers can waive the cap with a two-thirds vote. And they have in the past. Uhlir said Katie Bartlett, Ducey's deputy chief of staff, said her boss committed to calling special sessions only if necessary.

\* See Story on page 23

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PHOENIX — A bipartisan group of legislators called on Gov. Doug Ducey to live up to his promise to call a special session to address a school spending crunch before he — and some of them — leave office at the end of the year.

#### **Ukraine says animals' eyes sent to some of its embassies (/stories/ukraine-says-animals-eyes-sent-to-some-of-its-embassies,347058)**

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#### **Dobson Ranch Library closing Saturday for 2 weeks for construction (/stories/dobson-ranch-library-closing-saturday-for-2-weeks-for-construction,346821)**

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