



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF THE VALLEY

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF THE VALLEY LAUNCHES LARGE-SCALE ESPORTS PROGRAM IN CLUBS

Phoenix, Ariz. (March 15, 2023) - Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley has introduced a comprehensive esports program in its Clubs focused on helping youth and teens develop valuable skills and make healthy choices while playing video games. Like all Club programs, this esports program will help kids “Play with a Purpose.”

Powered by Cox Communications, the esports initiative lives under our Healthy Lifestyles pillar. Our signature program encourages Club members to build critical thinking skills through game play, work as a competitive team, learn sportsmanship, and even perform healthy exercises for the body.

BGCAZ worked with a local expert, University of Advancing Technology professor Derric Clark, to develop this esports program. Clubs will have access to in-house eSports Specialists committed to implementing high-quality esports curriculum that drives social-emotional wellness, teamwork, leadership, and conflict resolution. The program will include inter-Club esports Leagues and competitions as the long-term planning is implemented.

“We know that teens and youth play video games, and we don’t want them to have to play at home alone, or online with strangers. Our goal in creating this program was to ensure that young people have a safe place to play where they have positive connections with adults and other youth, and develop healthy habits around esports play,” said Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley CEO **Marcia Mintz**. “Our members can now enjoy gaming in a fun environment, with leading technology, while doing homework and having a healthy snack and meal after school. They might even pick up some new strategies and skills for the games.”

All games played in the Clubs are rated E for Everyone or are otherwise vetted to ensure they are safe to play. Additionally, Clubs will utilize a closed network, so Club members play exclusively with each other while being supervised by adult staff members.

The esports program works through three Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley priority outcomes:

Healthy Lifestyles

A key element of the esports program is Healthy Lifestyles, both emotional and physical.

Gamers go through many emotions as part of a competitive gaming or sports experience. It is key for members to learn techniques to identify and manage their emotional state. This encompasses frustration management, conflict resolution, and staying cool under pressure.

Members will learn skills in communication, collaboration, and self-reflection as part of learning about and raising their emotional intelligence.

Finally, members will learn about escapism and its impact on game / life balance.

There is also a physical component to competitive esports that is an essential part of peak performance. Members will develop a healthy approach to gaming time, practice, and participation. Techniques to relieve eye strain and hand fatigue will be taught and practiced. In addition, back and neck stretches and leg stretching will be emphasized. Rounding out the physical, members will practice their reaction time and eye hand coordination.

Academic Success

Through gaming, members develop critical thinking skills. As part of the esports program, members will think strategically as they analyze gameplay and develop competitive strategies to improve their in-game performance. Members will embrace the concept of “Playing with Purpose” as they start, learn, practice, and excel in esports.

Good Character & Leadership

Gaming creates many opportunities to develop character and leadership, both peer-to-peer and member-to-adult. As part of the esports program, members will work as a team to improve the skills of all players. Team building will be a key element within each club as members mentor each other through positive social interaction.

The esports program is made possible through BGCAZ’s longtime partnership with Cox Communications. Cox provides internet access to Clubs and has sponsored 12 Innovation Labs with Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley. Cox Innovation Labs provide a place for kids to do homework and explore the world via the internet, in addition to engaging with gaming technology, virtual reality, digital printers, and more.

MORE INFO: www.bgcaz.org/

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About Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Valley offers affordable after-school and summer programs for more than 16,000 young people in grades K-12. At more than 30 Clubs across the Valley, BGCAZ provides award-winning programs designed to change the lives of young people. For nearly 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.