



## Introducing the Broadstep Community Spotlight Series

From the Desk of Lynn Mason, President & CEO

At Broadstep, our mission is to provide first-class behavioral health and supportive living services by being the nation's best employer, provider, and community partner. Effective community partnerships double the impact of our work by advancing social equity, increasing access to care, and improving overall public health outcomes. Each quarter, we will recognize leaders and organizations who share these principles and embody our values of ACE IT with Fun. We are dedicating our cover story this month to our first spotlight, the Raleigh Boys & Girls Club ("BGC") and its Athletic Director, Rashad Herndon.

This year's MLK Day of Service created an opportunity for Raleigh Broadstep leaders to engage in our Wake County, NC communities. Jim Standish (CFO), Scott Huntington (CCO), John Tote (VP-Business Development) and I had the pleasure of spending the day with the staff and members of Raleigh's Boys and Girls Club. All of us had experienced varying levels of exposure to the BGC nationwide, and we all agreed that the impact of this organization on communities is unparalleled. According to a recent study by University of Michigan's School of Public Health, every \$1 invested in Boys & Girls Clubs returns nearly \$10 in current and future earnings and cost-savings to their communities. BGCs across America focus on creating 21st century leaders, building a healthier generation and developing globally competitive graduates. The Raleigh Boys & Girls Club embodies these goals daily.

Just as we focus on impact outcomes, so does the BGC in Raleigh. According to the Club's latest annual report, nearly 50% of its members improved to or maintained an A/B average in school, 95% of the Club's teens abstain from alcohol (compared to 70% nationally) and nearly 60% have been physically active for at least 5 days per week. In addition to positively impacting the lives of Wake County's youth daily, the Club has become, literally and figuratively, a life-saving force during the pandemic. With daily extended hours, BGC offers a healthy and safe environment for students to learn virtually and engage in extracurricular activities while enabling parents/ guardians to continue working.



This great work could not be accomplished without dedicated, accountable and heart-driven leaders like Rashad Herndon, the Athletic Director for the Boys and Girls Club in Raleigh. I had the opportunity to get to know Rashad on MLK Day as well as in a subsequent interview. A true head, heart, and hands leader, it was clear to me why he was named the Club's 2019 Staff of the Year. Raleigh's BGC has been a part of his life since he was 4 years old and his stepfather was the Club Director. Rashad found himself consistently at the Club, witnessing the challenges as well as the positive differences that could be achieved.

He continued to volunteer at the Club through high school but set his sights differently in college on Sports Management and pursuing a career in sports agency or sales. After graduating from Western Carolina University, he entered the corporate retail industry in sales

and management. But the challenges and needs of Raleigh's Boys Club made it impossible for him to stay away. "I would make the drive to Raleigh from Durham everyday after work because there was too much need at the Club," shared Herndon. "The staff turnover ratio was very high with many employees not making it a full year. All that volatility impacted the kids. The boys were not living the Boys Club Way. The kids were lost, and the staff were not there for the right reasons."

For a year, Rashad worked from 6a-3p at his management job at Macy's Stores and rushed to the Club to work part-time from 3:30p-8p. Finally, in 2011, he decided the BGC and the young men there needed his full-time commitment. "You do not do this type of job for the pay," he laughed, "you have to do it for the reward of improving and changing lives. You have to love seeing a kid grow." Rashad believes there is "no such thing as a bad kid", there is only "bad teaching or no teaching". Good teaching imparts "routines and habits" and is based upon "clarity, reality, and consequences."



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS  
OF AMERICA**

I was moved by a story Herndon shared regarding a talented, popular young man at his Club who struggled reading although he was in high school. Rashad, an accomplished basketball player and coach, understood the motivation playing sports could provide. He leveraged this knowledge to create "Gym Rats Eat Bookworms." He started, as their coach, by modeling the way. He would read ESPN Magazine and Sports Illustrated in front of them. He'd ask probing questions such as "what are you going to do if you're a professional athlete and you cannot read and understand your contract?" Soon, he had the boys reading a book or magazine of their choosing for 30 minutes before working out or playing a sport. As they sat quietly and read, other kids wanted to know what was going on and how they could get in on the activity. Students helped each other with reading and created an environment in which they could be helped without embarrassment. Ultimately this young man's reading significantly improved, and he brought his cousin to the Club to receive help as well.

Rashad says that as much as BGC contributes to the community, they need quite a bit of help in return. Some of the kids at the Club need intervention from more intensive behavioral health specialists or social workers. A greater police presence in peaceful times would serve to help youth understand that officers are there to support them and not reinforce a fear-based culture. The Club requires significantly more volunteers as its census is at an all-time high due to the pandemic. Additionally, sponsorships and financial contributions help to support further programs in sports, STEM, education, and health awareness. Membership is only \$7.50 per year per member, clearly not enough to cover all that these children require.

Like all of us at Broadstep, Rashad and the entire staff at Raleigh's Boys and Girls Club seek to create a space that all members can feel at home and thrive. We hope to work together to find ways that as community neighbors, we can support each other in our goals and helping children develop into the best version of themselves. Thank you to the Boys and Girls Club and Rashad Herndon for all that you do!