

# Sharing Our Stories



## Open the Door to Great Futures - Keystone Club Boys & Girls Club of Nowata in Oklahoma

For Native youth, leadership is more than learning how to speak in front of a crowd or lead a meeting. It is about honoring where you come from, finding your voice, and creating a stronger future for the next seven generations. At Boys & Girls Club of Nowata, Oklahoma, that spirit of leadership is alive and thriving through the Keystone Club Program.



Serving 392 young people annually for two years now the Boys & Girls Club of Nowata has built one of its strongest teen programs through Keystone, where 16 dedicated members have embraced opportunities to lead, serve, and make a difference. This year, 14 Keystone members traveled with five Club staff members to the National Keystone Conference in Orlando, Florida, joining teens from Boys & Girls Clubs across the country and around the world.

Among them was MaShayla Brown, a young leader whose passion and vision left a lasting impact. As a member of the Keystone Steering Committee, MaShayla played an active role in helping plan the conference. She advocated for the inclusion of Supaman, the nationally recognized Native American rapper, pow wow dancer, and activist from the Crow Tribe of Montana. Known for sharing messages of cultural pride, resilience, and hope, Supaman's performance inspired hundreds of young people and reinforced the importance of honoring Indigenous identity while pursuing personal dreams.

The conference also brought a moment of celebration for the Nowata Club when MaShayla was recognized as a recipient of the prestigious \$25,000 Panda Cares Scholarship. For her Club, family, and community, it was a powerful reminder of what can happen when young people are given the support and confidence to succeed.

The journey did not stop there. Six Keystone members also participate in the Club's Think, Learn, Create Change (TLC) program. The week before the conference, these youth traveled to Washington, D.C., for the Summit for the Advocacy of Youth (SAY), where they presented an ambitious project focused on creating a poverty-awareness curriculum for Oklahoma schools. Through this effort, they are learning how the legislative process works and how their voices can influence meaningful change for future generations.

According to CEO Kristal Diver, "Our Keystone members have taken ownership of this program and grown tremendously as leaders. They are not just participating, they are helping lead the program, making decisions, serving on committees, and representing our Club."

At Boys & Girls Club of Nowata, Keystone is more than a program. It is a pathway for Native youth to honor their heritage, strengthen their communities, and confidently step into their futures as leaders, advocates and changemakers.



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## Open the Door to Great Futures - Boys & Girls Club of Hawaii's Nanakuli Club

For 16 years, the Boys & Girls Club of Hawaii, has stood as a beacon of hope, opportunity, and belonging on the Waianae Coast. That commitment shined brighter than ever during Summer Nights, a back-to-school community celebration held at the Nanakuli Club that brought together more than 104 Club kids and 260 community members in a display of culture, connection and community. The event transformed the Club into a vibrant gathering place



where keiki and 'ohana came together to learn, create and celebrate. Among the evening's highlights were the lei kūpe'e and lei po'o making stations, where youth engaged in hands-on cultural activities that connected them to Hawaiian traditions. As keiki carefully crafted their lei, they were doing more than creating something beautiful, they were strengthening their understanding of their heritage, honoring cultural practices passed down through generations, and developing a deeper sense of pride in who they are.

Summer Nights also provided a safe and welcoming environment where young people could explore their creativity and participate in meaningful learning opportunities. Through hands-on activities, youth developed patience, problem-solving abilities, and artistic skills while gaining a greater appreciation for Hawaiian values and culture. These experiences support not only personal development but also the confidence and resilience that contribute to academic success and future leadership.

The benefits of the evening extended beyond the youth participants. Families were given valuable opportunities to reconnect and spend quality time together in a positive setting. Caregivers and children shared stories, laughter, and experiences, strengthening family relationships and reinforcing the importance of community support. The event reminded families that they are part of a larger network of people and organizations committed to their well-being and success.

Community partnerships played a critical role in making Summer Nights possible. Generous donations from KS Kaiaulu, Starbucks, Crocs, and Carter's Children's Clothing provided families with resources and support that helped address immediate needs while demonstrating the collective power of giving. These partnerships reflected a shared commitment to investing in local families and ensuring youth have the tools they need to thrive.

What made Summer Nights especially impactful was its ability to celebrate culture while fostering community engagement. Approximately 75% of attendees were Native Hawaiian, representing families from Nanakuli and Waianae. The event created a strong sense of belonging and reinforced the idea that thriving communities are built through collaboration.



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## Open the Door to Great Futures - Boys & Girls Club of Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi

For the Boys & Girls Club of Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians in California, preparing for a new school year means more than buying school supplies or returning to the classroom. It means opening the door to great futures through meaningful experiences that connect youth to their culture and community.



Established just four years ago, the Club continues to create opportunities that help Native youth learn, grow and build confidence. During its 2026 summer program, 16 youth participated in a series of enriching back-to-school experiences, including a Nature Walk and Cedar Gathering this July along Beasore Road, a virtual reality field trip through Yosemite National Park, and an educational visit to the Friant Fish Hatchery.

Each experience was designed to strengthen academic success, cultural knowledge, leadership skills and environmental stewardship. During the Nature Walk and Cedar Gathering, youth learned traditional Chukchansi gathering protocols, including how to respectfully harvest, clean, and prepare natural materials. Elders and leaders shared teachings about the importance of caring for the land and honoring the cultural practices passed down through generations. These lessons helped students develop a deeper sense of identity and responsibility while taking pride in their heritage.

The Club also partnered with community organizations to expand learning outside of the classroom. During their visit to the Friant Fish Hatchery, students attended a presentation led by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. They learned about the importance of protecting rivers, streams, lakes, and aquatic species while gaining a greater understanding of conservation efforts. One of the most memorable moments was feeding trout at the facility and seeing firsthand how environmental stewardship supports healthy ecosystems for future generations.

To further inspire curiosity and discovery, youth participated in an immersive virtual reality journey through Yosemite National Park. The 360-degree experience allowed them to explore breathtaking landscapes, hear the sounds of nature, and visit places many had never seen before. The virtual adventure brought science, geography, and environmental education to life in an exciting and engaging way.

Together, these experiences embodied the spirit of Opening the Door to Great Futures. By blending cultural education, environmental learning, and innovative technology, the Boys & Girls Club of Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians are helping young people with new knowledge and a greater appreciation for the world around them. Most importantly, it empowered them to see their own potential and greatness.



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## Open the Door to Great Futures - Boys & Girls Club of Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas

As summer drew to a close, the Boys & Girls Club of the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas was filled with activity, excitement and connection, demonstrating the powerful impact Clubs have on Native youth and their communities. Through many dedicated partnerships, cultural connections and opportunities, for 27 years, the Club has been creating experiences that advance future generations while celebrating the strength and resilience of the Kickapoo community.



This summer Club members explored the natural world with staff from the Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks, observing pollinators and learning about environmental stewardship. The summer program concluded with a family recognition celebration that honored members, families, staff and partners who contributed to a successful summer.

One of the most impactful highlights of the summer was the participation of local teens in Kansas Workforce ONE's Youth Work Experience program. These young leaders worked alongside Club staff, helping facilitate activities, support younger members and assist with daily operations. Through hands-on experience, they developed leadership and teamwork skills that will serve them well in the future. Several participants will continue serving during the after-school program, strengthening the Club's talent pipeline and supporting Organizational Strength while preparing the next generation of Native leaders.

The Club also brought families and community members together through the Community Healing GONA Fashion Show. Sponsored by the Kickapoo Behavioral Health Program, the event celebrated elders, wellness and healing while fostering community pride and connection. Seeing multiple generations gathered in one place highlighted the importance of culture and collective well-being. Events like these deepen Youth & Teen Impact while expanding the Club's Influence as a trusted community gathering place.

Youth had opportunities to explore new experiences beyond the Club as well. Through a partnership with the Royals Amateur Development System, members participated in batting practice and outfield activities at Kauffman Stadium before enjoying a Kansas City Royals game. The celebration brought together youth and created memories that inspired confidence, aspiration and belonging. These experiences demonstrate the potential of Native youth when provided with opportunities to dream big.

From workforce readiness and teen engagement to family healing events and community partnerships, the Boys & Girls Club of the Kickapoo Tribe exemplifies Opening the Door to Great Futures. More importantly, it reflects the enduring strength, culture and potential of Indigenous communities and the meaningful difference Clubs make in the lives of Native youth every day.

