

# Because YOU cared

Doing Whatever It Takes to Continue Building Great Futures



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF SOUTH ALABAMA



“My daughter knows she is in a safe environment.”

***Rasheika D. Bell***

Parent of a Kiwanis Club Kid

## Inside This Issue

- Youth of the Year
- A New CEO
- Gulf Coast Children’s Book Festival
- United Way Day of Caring

Take a look inside  to find out more about our current programs.

# New CEO Robert Kennedy, Jr.



Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama (BGCSA) & POINTE Academy LLC announce the appointment of Robert Kennedy, Jr. as the next Chief Executive Officer, effective July 18, 2022. BGCSA Board of Directors conducted a national search with the assistance of Boys & Girls Clubs of America's National Talent Acquisition team. Kennedy succeeds Tim Wills, who resigned after six years as CEO.

Board Chair Todd Denison believes Kennedy is the right person to continue building on the progress of the Clubs. "We believe we got the right individual in Robert Kennedy, Jr. to partner with us to optimize our resource development so that we can expand the number of children we serve and who need us most," says Denison.

Kennedy brings 30 years of team leadership and budget management experience to the BGCSA organization. Most recently, Kennedy served as the Chief Marketing Officer for Brett/Robinson vacation rentals in Gulf Shores, Alabama. Kennedy is a former Naval Officer who was stationed in Japan and Singapore.

"I am humbled to have been selected as the next CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama. It is an honor and a privilege to join an organization with a deep history of serving the youth of our community. I am extremely excited to partner with the Board of Directors, club leaders, and volunteers to craft a unified vision for the future," says Kennedy.

## Camp Chandler-Tonsmeire

### Summer Camp Update



Summer at Camp Chandler-Tonsmeire was filled with fun, smiles, and new friends! Camp this year started on June 10th and ran until July 22nd. Camp Chandler Tonsmeire is our outdoor education program on over 140 acres in Mobile focused on character and leadership development and curbing summer learning loss. With each

themed week, our campers were involved in archery, hiking, games, cooking, canoeing, crafts, sports, or swimming.

"After two years of virtual everything, and no reality, it doesn't get more real than this. Our kids go home dirty, sweaty, and tired," said Camp Director Greg Hall.

Campers returned home confident that they could meet new challenges, build new skills, and make new friends. But, most importantly, Camp Chandler-Tonsmeire is a place where kids can be kids again.



Funding for this program provided by the City of Mobile - American Rescue Plan Act Social Services Assistance and the United Way of Southwest Alabama.

# Corporate Spotlight Murphy USA

Every year, 4.3 million young people are served by Boys & Girls Clubs. Murphy USA, Inc. partnered with Boys & Girls Clubs of America to show their continued support to kick off the first phase of the “Great Futures Fueled Here” cause campaign. Customers in Mobile were able to donate \$1, \$5, or \$10 at checkout at their nearest Murphy USA location to support Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama.

“Murphy USA is excited to begin year 3 of our Great Futures Fueled Here Campaign, a bi-annual round-up fundraiser for Boys & Girls Clubs of America,” said Renee Bacon. “Since we launched this program in 2020, we have raised over \$3.1M dollars to support kids and teens at local Boys & Girls Clubs across the country, and we are just getting started! With nearly 1,650 stores across 27 states, we are dedicated to giving back to the communities we live, work, and serve. Our commitment to America’s youth does not have an end date, and we look forward to partnering with our employees and customers to meet those needs. TOGETHER we can fuel great futures for local kids.”



## About Murphy USA

Murphy USA (NYSE: MUSA) is a leading retailer of gasoline and convenience merchandise with more than 1,650 stations located primarily in the Southwest, Southeast, Midwest, and Northeast United States. The company and its team of nearly 15,000 employees serve an estimated 2.0 million customers each day through its network of retail gasoline and convenience stations in 27 states. Many of Murphy USA's sites are in close proximity to Walmart stores. The company also markets gasoline and other products at standalone stores under the Murphy Express and QuickChek brands. Murphy USA ranks 322 among Fortune 500 companies. For more information, please visit [www.murphyusa.com](http://www.murphyusa.com).

## Parent Spotlight Rasheika D. Bell



For the past two years, Rasheika has been sending her child to our Kiwanis Branch, where we take pride in molding the minds and futures of our youth in a fun, safe, and interactive Club environment. At BGCSA, we never take a single approach to help kids succeed. It takes caring mentors, such as our trained Club staff. It takes a safe place, like our Clubs that are consistently there for the kids they serve. It takes innovative, quality programs designed to empower youth to excel in school and lead healthy, productive lives. We do whatever it takes to ensure all kids have a great future. “My daughter knows she is in a safe environment,” Rasheika says.

*“My daughter knows she is in a safe environment” - Rasheika*

**WE ARE NOW REGISTERING YOUTH FOR OUR YEAR-ROUND CLUB PROGRAMMING. VISIT [BGCSOUTHAL.ORG/CLUBS](http://BGCSOUTHAL.ORG/CLUBS) TO LEARN MORE.**



# 2022 Youth of the Year Stories



2022  
YOY Winner  
**Brooklyn R.**  
Semmes Branch

**Brooklyn Rowell** became a member of the Semmes Boys & Girls Club as a second-grader. Brooklyn credits her involvement in Club programs as having provided her with confidence, skills and knowledge, and cites the “No Limits Girls’ Aviation” program as having the greatest impact on her plans for an aviation career. Because of her involvement with “No Limits,” including serving as the program’s Teen Leader. Brooklyn received a scholarship to attend the summer program at the Naval Flight Academy.

At Mary Montgomery High School, she has a 4.0 GPA and is a member of the Honor Society and the volleyball team. Additionally, with the Mobile Storm volleyball team she is on the top team in her age group and was named Player of the Tournament for the “15 National” team. Upon graduation from high school in 2023, she intends to enter Auburn.

A love of serving others is shown by Brooklyn’s mentorship with the Kids’ Ministries at Dayspring Baptist Church, where she does media/ tech duties for the elementary department, assists in the preschool area, and sets up and cleans for Wednesday night services. Community service includes volunteering with food pantries, the Ronald McDonald House, and Cleaning the Gulf Coast.

*“We have the responsibility to love others. I believe the best way to do that is through service.”*

*“Now, I am a leader and I want to inspire other Club kids, like the past teens have inspired me.”*

**Arkayla M. Chestang** believes “a strong girl makes a powerful woman.” At age eight, her family moved to Mobile. Changes such as attending a new school, making new friends, and living in a new city brought fear and anxiety. However, her fears subsided when her mom enrolled her in the Kiwanis Boys & Girls Club. She affectionately describes the Club as her second home. “Because of my Club experience, I am no longer afraid of change, and I embrace it,”

Arkayla is a graduate of Accel Day and Evening Academy where she served as a school ambassador, and the future looks bright. Activities at the Club kept her busy, from mentoring to photography and developing a passion for the arts. She also participated in Torch Club, WeOwnFridays, and held membership in Keystone Club, where she served as President. Arkayla plans to major in graphic design in college.

“The Club has impacted my life so much, and I was the kid in the shadow while everyone else was a part of something bigger. Now, I am a leader, and I want to inspire other Club kids, as others have inspired me. I’m a brand-new person, and I wouldn’t change it for the world.”



**Arkayla C.**  
Kiwanis Branch



**Kayleigh M.**  
Optimist Branch

“The Boys & Girls Club has made an enormous impact on my life, and it has molded me into a person that makes me proud,” states **Kayleigh Morgan**. Kayleigh volunteers at her church, school, and non-profits, including Ronald McDonald House and Senior Citizens Outreach, amongst other agencies. Her most recent project includes preparing personal care packages for McKemie Place, the only emergency shelter for unaccompanied women in Southwest Alabama.

Evidence of the Club’s impact and her growth as a leader is evident through her service as President of the National Society of Black Engineers Jr. (NSBE Jr.) Keystone Club, Gavel Club, “No Limits” Girls Aviation Club of South Alabama, Smart Girls, and captain of the Optimist Swim team, where she advanced to the Scuba Diving program. Kayleigh has also been recognized as Youth of the Month.

The future looks bright for this rising junior at Murphy High School, where she is a member of the National Honor Society, Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). After graduating high school, she wants to further her studies at Southern University.

*“I am living my journey, because of the strong and positive support system at my Club. The staff encouragement and love have made a difference in my life.”*

*“Love yourself, Be yourself, Treat yourself.”*

**Landyn Callender** believes in the power of love, the ability to dream, and the power of one person making a difference. Twelve years ago, Landyn entered the doors of the Bernard Malkove Cody Rd Club, terrified of her fellow peers yet displaying a bubbly social butterfly persona. However, her social anxiety went away when she began participating in various programs and classes at the Club. Through art classes, she found her passion and unleashed her creative side.

Her confidence grew. She began to try new things and became open-minded toward others. Now she sees the world from a creative/ artistic perspective and draws upon her skills to problem solve and help others, whether creating a flyer to share information about upcoming events or encouraging others to participate in Club activities.

“I am incredibly thankful for attending the Boys & Girls Club for everything. I am thankful for the skills I have acquired to be an effective, creative, and passionate leader,” Landyn says.

Landyn one day hopes to create a facility or a place where people go to be with themselves for a day. Such as a futuristic amusement therapeutic park, where it is both educational and fun for all ages.



*Landyn C.*  
Bernard Malkove Branch



*Brandon O.*  
Sonny Callahan Branch

**Brandon Oates** is a senior at Murphy High School and describes himself as a regular and laid-back guy. He loves playing basketball and enjoys his ten years as a Club kid. He credits various programs offered through the Club for his success and optimism for the next chapter of his life. “The Club and the staff have prepared me with skills for a bright future, and I am more focused and on the straight and narrow,” says Brandon. The future looks bright as he prepares for life after high school. Brandon plans to attend the University of South Alabama and study to become a radiology technician.

*“The Club and the staff have prepared me with skills for a bright future, and I am more focused and on the straight and narrow”*

# *Jr. Youth of the Year*



*Kingsley Barnes*  
Gilliard Branch



*Charlotte Hayes*  
Semmes Branch



*Kendred Rivers*  
Bernard Malkove Branch



*Amelia Moore*  
Kiwanis Branch



*Leah Graham*  
Sonny Callahan Branch



*Jayden Marrero*  
Foley Branch



*Kayleigh Green*  
Optimist Branch

# VIRTUAL GULF COAST CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL

READ.LEARN.ACHIEVE

In March, Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama hosted 78 classrooms in our virtual Gulf Coast Children's Book Festival. Rosa Monteiro and the students had a chance to interview children's book authors Deborah Diesen, Alexandria Cunningham, Nick Bruel, and James Preller. She



gave away books, comics, gift certificates, and author signed books during the broadcast. After the festival, Rosa and her team dressed as book characters and personally delivered over 4,000 books to teachers and students who participated. The virtual book festival was part of the BGSCA "Read, Learn, Achieve Initiative." The initiative also includes The Blue Roof Library Trail for getting books into the hands of children and Let's Read Mobile, our story time video program of popular children's books read aloud by community volunteers. To help with this initiative, contact Rosa Monteiro, Director of Academic Success, at [rmonteiro@bgcsouthal.org](mailto:rmonteiro@bgcsouthal.org).



## United Way Day of Caring

The United Way of Southwest Alabama held its 28th Annual Day of Caring, one of the region's largest single day of volunteerism on May 6, 2022

Organizations were invited to volunteer and leave a mark on someone's heart. Volunteers are also given the opportunity to hear the stories of those whose lives have been impacted as a result of the agencies funded by UWSWA.



Hancock Whitney associates in South Alabama participated in the United Way of Southwest Alabama's Day of Caring by helping at Camp Chandler-Tonsmeire. Camp Chandler-Tonsmeire is an outdoor education program by the Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama focused on character and leadership development and curbing summer learning loss. Hancock Whitney volunteers washed and painted the trail head to match Hearin Hall. They cleaned up the facilities at Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama's Camp Chandler Tonsmeire so the kids can have a great summer at camp.



UWSWA Outreach and Community Engagement Coordinator Katherine Pitman said, "Giving back to individuals and nonprofit agencies is rewarding and many times, transformational. This year's 28th Day of Caring is no different. Bringing together the business community and direct service agencies leaves a positive mark on all citizens' hearts".





## Alumni Spotlight Roger McCreary

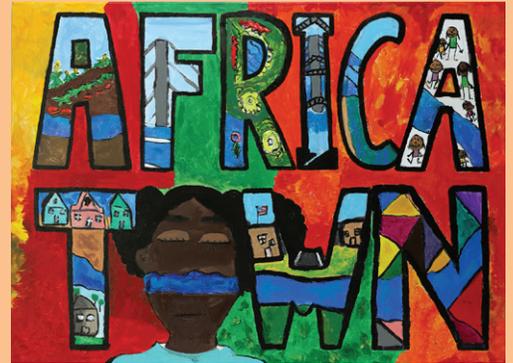
Congratulations to our incredible Optimist BGCSA alumni, Roger McCreary, for being selected by the Tennessee Titans in the 2022 NFL Draft!

Roger grew up in our Optimist Boys & Girls Club, where he was exposed to various activities like sports, games, art, and so much more. Roger says, "Doing something new every day just made me love everything about my Club. It taught me how to build connections and work as a team with others." By working with a diverse range of people at his Club, he gained teamwork skills that he uses every day.

Before competing in the draft, Roger visited his childhood Club to celebrate his accomplishments with the staff who poured into him and to inspire our Club members. Help us wish Roger continuous success and safety throughout his football career! BGCSA is happy to have inspired Roger throughout his journey, and we wish him the best in his future!



## Africatown Online Store



Through her work as an art instructor with the Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama, Soynika Edwards-Bush guided middle school students in creating this beautiful painting representing Africatown in Mobile. Africatown was formed by a group of West Africans who were in the last known illegal shipment of enslaved people to the United States aboard the ship Clotilda.

The painting began as an entry for an art contest and blossomed into a movement that's inspired youth and teens to learn more about their community and its unique history.



The bright red colors and the letters spell "Africatown," with each letter depicting something about the region, whether it's the landscape, waterways, churches, homes, school bridge, and people in the community. Jeremiah, a 7th grader, says "My drawings show churches and a bridge and the churches represent the community's religious beliefs."

This painting was photographed and applied to various items available for purchase through our Africatown shop. Profits from the sale of these items go towards paying for camp experiences for Boys & Girls Clubs members in South Alabama. Visit [www.bgcsouthal.org/africatown](http://www.bgcsouthal.org/africatown) to learn more.



## Miss Alabama Competition

Congratulations to our very own Brianna Burrell, program director at the Bernard Malkove Branch of Boys & Girls Clubs of South Alabama. Bri is Miss Mobile Bay 2022 and placed as first runner-up in the Miss Alabama Competition. Bri's social impact focuses on advocating for funding for STEM classrooms, increasing media representation of people of color in STEM fields, and creating positive, engaging learning environments for students of color. We are proud of you!





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OF SOUTH ALABAMA

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## Jazz Art Writers South

At The University of South Alabama on June 16th, our club kids celebrated the J.A.W.S. (Jazz Art Writers South) art exhibit. As part of this event, our own Soynika Edwards-Bush worked with kids at BGCSA to convey their jazz experience. She asked them to listen to an artist and capture what they felt, heard, imagined, or saw when they listened to the song. The clubs that participated were Kiwanis, Sonny Callahan, 21st Century Gilliard, and Malkove. The event was sponsored by The Black Ink Coalition and also featured a concert by the Excelsior Brass Band!

