



Phillips Brooks House Association

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

2020

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SUPLove Resiliency

Ali Barker '22

Summer Programming
Group Officer



PBHA was the first place that I went after learning that in-person classes were cancelled for the rest of the semester. Kate, Thomas, and I sat around the wooden table in her office, half-contingency planning and half-consoling each other with reassurances that summer programming would definitely happen. As I prepared to move into an isolated dorm, I worried about how relationship building and training would work online, and how it would feel to be back on campus in June for camp.

Pretty quickly, we realized that our dream of in-person summer programming was not going to be an option, and we had to adapt. We spent the next two months experimenting with our directors and staff. We learned that large opening circles were difficult over Zoom and that screen time exceeding 120 minutes felt a bit like torture. Slowly but surely, we put together a model that we hoped would allow for relation-

ship building and academic enrichment that is central to any summer with the Summer Urban Program (SUP). Still, we worried: Would our campers get anything out of it? Would they even want to come? Would students be able to make friends over video chat?

"Being a JC this summer gave me the opportunity to give back to my community, while working within a super supportive environment and some of my closest friends. I loved planning JC hours and teaching the kids. It allowed me to further develop my leadership skills and meet new people, as well as be a part of super cool projects."

- SUP Junior Counselor

This doubt melted away during the first hours of camp. That morning, anxious directors saw full classrooms of campers engaged and energized by the opportunity to create new relationships. On that first day and throughout the summer, as I watched Jess lead movement classes that energized all of Chinatown Adventure (CHAD), and sat in on daily meme competitions with the oldest group at South Boston Outreach Summer (SBOS), I witnessed first-hand the resiliency of SUPLove. Senior counselors (SCs) managed to create space in their Zoom rooms for exploration and creativity. They became experts in a wide range of apps and softwares, just so they could provide the most engaging and fulfilling summer experience possible to their campers.

Even though SUP didn't take place in the way we had imagined it, our team took a leap of faith together, and it paid off. While we couldn't go on our final trips to Roll On America, we were able to take virtual journeys to Versailles and Mars. Although we weren't able to eat meals together, campers logged in to virtual cafeterias to chat with each other before afternoon classes started. Where we had worried virtual programming would leave a gaping hole in our community, our campers and staff filled every second of the summer with love, positive energy, and joy in learning.

As we transition into after school programming, I am constantly reminded of how much this virtual summer meant to our campers. Former campers beam when they see faces they recognize on Zoom. Parents call the SUP phone number to make sure that their children will be grouped with former SCs. Directors work to create term-time bridge programs where they didn't exist before so that every single camper has the opportunity to stay engaged with the SUP community. As I watch the SUPLove still in action, months after camp ended, I'm so grateful that 160 college students, high schoolers, and adult staff poured every ounce of energy and creativity they had into this uncertain experiment. COVID-19 may have set us afloat, but the SUP community remains as connected and grounded in its values as ever before.

"The program allowed Amara to step up and lead the class. This program gave her the opportunity to see herself as a leader to young campers."

- SUP Parent

PBHA Continues to Serve

Maria Dominguez-Gray, Ed.M. '94
Class of '55 Executive Director

There are moments in history for which generations look back and ask, "Do you remember where you were when?" or "What did you do?" While the current moment of the COVID 19 pandemic and racial unrest has been heartbreaking to so many of our students, constituents, and extended PBHA family; for those of us involved in the Summer Urban Programs (SUP) and other PBHA summer programming, it has also proven to be a time of possibility, innovation, grace and solidarity. We have been reminded of the potential of student idealism, commitment and creativity, the generosity and dedication of our partners and supporters, and the steadfast importance of PBHA's mission. At the core of that mission, PBHA has always engaged student leaders to address gaps in resources and opportunities in Cambridge and Boston. This summer our neighbors needed us more than ever and we answered that call-- not always perfectly and often facing uncertainty-- but we showed up strong and that choice to make a difference had a transformative impact on the students, children and families. There is no doubt in my mind that they will always remember where they were and what they did the summer of 2020 and that memory will be one of love and hope.

Thank you for your belief in what was possible in the face of unprecedented

challenges. When students first had to leave campus in March, we didn't know what we could do, but we did know that our student leaders and constituents needed us to respond. In the first week, 250 of you responded to our call and provided housing, storage, and financial support for students who needed extra help safely moving, and also ensured that we could continue to meet the needs that our programs served. We were able to keep the Harvard Square Homeless Shelter running for additional weeks and the Y2Y Harvard Square Shelter for young adults open throughout the pandemic.



The spirit of possibility and generosity continued through the summer, allowing us to maintain our commitment to provide summer internships for all students along with summer jobs for teens. Working together, we were able to pivot the SUP model to operate remotely with synchronous and asynchronous learning, to help bridge the learning loss and offer social emotional support for 550 children disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. We

provided families with Chromebooks and iPads so that children could access the program and continue accessing school in the coming year. Each child also received a home learning kit, wellness kit (with jump ropes and pedometers for outdoor activity), and art supplies. Additionally, families facing food insecurity were provided with grocery gift cards. Outside of SUP, PBHA's Adult Education programs adapted to teach over 100 students remotely this summer.

As we look forward to what continues to be an uncertain year for so many, we are strengthened by what we have learned was possible this summer. I hope you find inspiration in the stories in this newsletter which represent only a fraction of that possibility. Even in the unknown, we will still be here for our students and communities. Thank you for joining us.

"The program was great in providing my daughter with social support - she was able to socialize with children her age, despite the pandemic. There were a lot of great academic aspects (reading, math games) and physical activities. All of it was organized so well."

- SUP Parent



Together, we made a difference for:

- 67 Senior Counselors**
- 70 Junior Counselors**
- 547 Campers & Families**



BRYE ■ CHAD ■ CYEP ■ FIO ■ KSP ■ MHSP
NAYEP ■ RYI ■ RYSE ■ SBOS ■ JLinC ■ LEADERS!

Supplying an Enriching & Unprecedented Summer

Thomas Phan '22
Summer Programming Group
Officer



SUP has always been a part of my life: from being a camper, directing a program, and to becoming a SUP Program Group Officer (PGO) alongside my amazing friend Ali, my journey continues to expand. This summer, all of our programs happened virtually. I remem-

ber being in Kate's office thinking that SUP might not happen at all this summer. We were all concerned about how a successful virtual program would run and how we would combat summer learning loss and be there for our community during this time.

We made it a priority to ensure that campers would have access to the materials needed to thrive in a remote environment. Thanks to local staff and directors, we were able to deliver Chromebooks, iPads, and school supplies to all of our youth. We were also able to provide internet access and increase food security by delivering food for families that are in need during this uncertain time. While youth and families were disappointed that camp was not taking place in person this year, they were also joyous to see staff going above and beyond to create a space and opportunity to have an impactful

summer.

SUP is more than just a job- it is a commitment to create and ensure the best community not just for the staff but also for the youth. Two summers ago, I told myself that my experience as a director was the hardest summer that I will ever love. However, being a PGO during this unprecedented time has shifted my feelings and perspective. Although it was not the summer that we hoped for in the beginning of February, it exceeded our expectations and became a memorable experience.

"Everything was a blessing from the supplies, to the food support, to the academic and emotional support... They took the time to make sure we were engaged and fully supported, it was great."

- SUP Parent

Mental Health & Wellness Care

Ying Yang '22
Leaders! Director

While the mental health and wellbeing of our high school-aged junior counselors has always been a priority for the Leaders! program, it was even more important this past summer. Being in isolation while facing so many uncertainties and troubles of the world can be unsettling; it can bring about anxiety, frustration, and despair. That is why we created a safe space for our junior counselors to process their emotions, and incorporated mindfulness sessions into our workshops to promote mental health. We wanted our teens to have the tools necessary to take care of their mental wellbeing even outside of the program.

Many of the teens in the program mentioned that they would like to learn more about mental health this summer, which led me to collaborate with Jaiden Doresca, a junior counselor from the South Boston Outreach Program (SBOS), to facilitate a workshop on mental health and wellbeing. Jaiden has done previous work around facilitating mental health conversations in her school. I thought that our junior counselors would be able to connect more extensively with someone who had personal experience navigating their own mental wellbeing. Jaiden reflected on her own journey with mental health and what she had hoped to bring to her peers through the workshop below:

"This summer, it was really important for me to make sure that I continued

to incorporate conversations about mental health in this time of uncertainty and heightened emotions. It occurred to me that not only were my peers struggling during the time with all that is going on in the world, but younger children were also just as confused and lacked connections with relationships. During SUP, I shared with my peers and campers what I learned through my journey with mental health: I shared best practices around coping mechanisms, stress management, and how to have conversations surrounding support with family members, friends, and educators. Most importantly, I shared that mental health looks different for each person. SUP gave me the opportunity to share my journey and allowed me to speak about the importance of mental health with others."

Thank you to our 2020 PBHA

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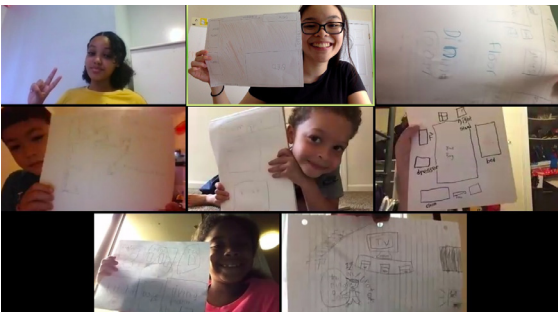
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Living History with RYI

Camryn Turner '21

Director, Roxbury Youth Initiative (RYI)

It is no secret that this summer was extremely unprecedented. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Roxbury Youth Initiative (RYI) was able to provide meaningful virtual programming to over 50 campers ages 6-13. This summer, we implemented the theme "Living History", which encompassed the idea that the experiences we have today directly correspond to those of the past and the future. Living History was divided into five weekly sub-themes: *Owning our Stories*; *Relearning the Past*; *Confronting the Present*; *Raising our Voices*; and *Reimagining the Future*.

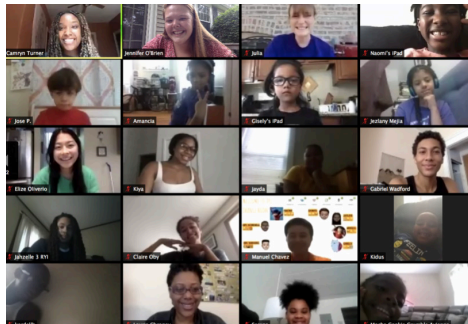
We hoped to engage our campers in meaningful discussions about a wide range of social and political issues to help them become more in tune with current events and understand how they fit into our history. We hoped to empower RYI campers by showing them that they were examples of living

history and they had the ability to use their voice and power to enact positive change within their communities. We focused heavily on the historical implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Movement. Each virtual classroom participated in a weekly curriculum that emphasized the importance of situating the events of today into the larger historical narrative. From making Black Lives Matter protest posters to taking virtual field trips to museums that celebrate Blackness, each counselor was prepared to facilitate discussions and activities that centered around the experiences of Black people. Every Friday, we came together as a full camp to wrap up the sub-theme for the week. For week two, *Relearning the Past*, the camp

"The counselors at RYI always have engaging, relevant, and interesting lesson plans for the kids!"

- SUP Parent

discussed the significance of history through a reflection on the quotes of influential Black people such as Martin Luther King Jr., Maya Angelou, and Michelle Obama. Each camper explained their interpretation of the quotes and stated why history matters to them. At the end of week 4, *Raising our Voices*, we taught our campers the importance and significance of specific Black Lives Matter protest chants such as, "SAY HER NAME". We were able to practice these chants together and learn the power of raising our voices. At the end of our five-week program, we were ecstatic to see that our campers had become more prepared and eager to have conversations about the social issues that they cared about.



Engaging Physical Activity Across Generations

Jessica Lem '22

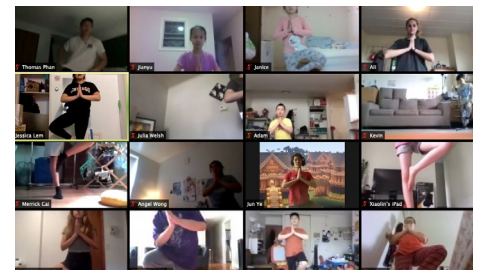
Director, Chinatown Adventure (CHAD)

Since Boston's K-12 schools moved virtually in March, we were aware that the daily physical activity for many of our campers had decreased. We didn't expect a pandemic to outlast the school year and to move our summer program remotely, but we were determined to make sure that our campers would still have the opportunity to have fun and be active. Although we could no longer go canoeing, rock climbing, or take walks around the

neighborhood together, we were able to be creative with our exercises and include many of our campers' families.

Logging onto our first Zoom gym class, I was unsure of what to expect. Let's just say that after five weeks of programming, and 10 group physical activity sessions later, I can say I really lived out my dream of being a gym teacher over the summer! As the sessions progressed, I saw campers' siblings and grandparents join in on the Zoom call. They would do the yoga poses, jump rope, and breathing exercises with us. Group physical activity not only

brought the campers together but also the families. They bonded over similar music genres, yoga poses, and typing out how much more cardio they wanted. Even under isolating times, the campers showcased their resiliency, excitement, and adapted to an abnormal CHAD.



Sponsor Spotlight: HUECU

Liz Kendall

Major Donor and Communications Officer

The Phillips Brooks House Association was thrilled to learn in early 2020 that the Harvard University Employees Credit Union (HUECU) would become a lead sponsor of the Summer Urban Program this year with a generous gift of \$20,000. This kind support allowed PBHA to keep up with hiring and paying SUP directors, senior, and junior counselors their promised stipends even when the spring of 2020 drastically changed SUP's original plans.

In addition to their generous sponsorship, HUECU ran a supply drive for SUP, with donations from credit union employees supporting SUP camper physi-

cal activity and wellness kits, and technology for campers to attend camp.

Later in the summer, HUECU leaders led SUP's high school student leaders in two specific financial literacy workshops: one focused on financial planning and the second focused on how to apply for financial aid for college. The workshops attracted SUP's 70 junior counselors and initiated new questions and conversations among the high school students.

In addition, HUECU graciously provided several free financial resources to the families of SUP campers, including a library of YouTube videos about financial literacy, as well as free budget and credit counseling from an affiliated organization.

PBHA is filled with gratitude for the opportunity to work with HUECU in 2020, and we admire how the organization continues to support our shared greater community, particularly at this difficult time. Learn more about HUECU at huecu.org!



Not a bank. **A benefit.**

Extending Accessibility in Our Communities

Albert Zhang '22 & Laura Murphy '22

Director, Adult ESOL Program

Summer 2020 put the creative power of AEP (Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages Program) to the test. AEP is a summer program that helps close critical English literacy service gaps in the Greater Boston Area by providing English instruction to low-income immigrant communities. Normally, instructors and students meet one another in the communities we serve- in the VietAid community center where children can be heard playing upstairs, or amidst the vibrant murals of Chelsea Collaborative where citizenship classes, job fairs, and the pursuit of legal justice converge. We're supposed to smell the chalk and hear the laughter after a word is chanted in unison; we're supposed to imbue energy into a classroom and feel it reflected back. In other words, we're supposed to participate in this vital ritual of edu-

cation together, in person.

COVID-19 challenged our program to reevaluate the very premise upon which it was founded: the ability for in-person classes to enhance communication and forge connections between different people. From teaching our (often elderly) students the digital literacy to use Zoom, to learning as instructors how to execute effective lessons online, and building a sense of community when we were hundreds of miles apart, we tackled issues that were no small feat to solve. We were able to test online teaching and gauge solutions for student accessibility, develop a new training for our instructors to teach online, and create online group chats that have become our new direct line of communication between instructors and students. We worked hard to make sure that distance and online learning wouldn't keep anyone from a free English education.

To share a few numbers, we ended

up reaching over 255 English learners across Dorchester, Chelsea, and Chinatown; offered 10 free classes; taught over 100 students every week; and created over 55 unique lesson plans. However, these numbers do not come close to illustrating the warmth and enthusiasm that we found in our online English-learning community. Our students brought a joy and drive to learn that transformed every Zoom class into an important daily ritual of quarantine and provided a vital source of human contact and communication. As many of our students noted by the end of our program, our classes had become their favorite part of the day. None of this could have been accomplished without the creativity necessary to reimagine our lesson plans and recreate the classroom. These hardships pulled the best out of us, and the circumstances created one of the most memorable summers in our program's history.

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From Camper to Director: Coming Full Circle



Fahedur Fahed '22
Director, Cambridge Youth
Enrichment Program (CYEP)

With the news of COVID-19 not dissipating anytime soon and the continuing need to be physically distanced, the contingency plans for CYEP were imagined, reinvented, and finally imple-

mented. We all had the common goal of being present for the community and serving them when they needed us the most — helping to prevent the widening gap of summer learning loss, offer some solace and a semblance of daycare to children who felt isolated, and to provide a space for campers to navigate times of distress.

My journey in CYEP began with my neighbor when I was a rising fourth grader — we were inseparable. As a low-income young person, I felt a sense of belonging from being surrounded by campers who were just like me. I attribute my love for learning to the CYEP community and my first Senior Counselor as a genuine mentor for

fostering a sense of curiosity. Her affirmations both during the summer and school year with hand-written letters helped me realize what could be possible when I firmly believed in a goal.

I have learned so much this summer about leadership, incorporating camper circumstances at the forefront of programming, and entrusting Senior Counselors to have complete autonomy over their curriculum. The relationships that the staff formed with campers and the willingness to cater to their needs made a tremendous impact on the overall programming. Reflecting on how I was a camper myself makes me feel fortunate to have had such an impactful full circle experience.