



# CLUB CHRONICLES

## What's Happening This Month?



Wednesday, January 1st - All BGCT Closed

January 2nd & 3rd - SDO All BGCT Clubs

Monday, January 6th - SDO for USD 450

Wednesday, January 15th - USD 437 Early Release

Monday, January 20th - SDO All BGCT Clubs

## Conversation Starters

The trick is to ask about things that are specific to avoid the “fine” and “nothing” responses after a long day!

- Tell me about the best part of your day.
- What was the hardest thing you had to do today?
- Did any of your classmates do anything funny?
- Tell me about what you read in class.
- What's the biggest difference between this year and last year?

## Staff Spotlight

This month's staff spotlight shines on Ms. Cristina, our dedicated Workforce Readiness Director. Since joining Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka in September, she has immersed herself in advancing opportunities for our members, focusing on workforce readiness. Her guidance was instrumental in the success of our Youth of the Year candidates in December, and she has taken on a pivotal leadership role in planning the 2025 UNHEARD Conference. Ms. Cristina's passion and commitment to empowering youth through meaningful experiences make her an invaluable member of our team.



## In the Club!

Club membership fees are assessed monthly. Account balances must be maintained in good standing in order to continue membership. Written notice must be received no less than 5 business days prior to the change requested in order to receive a credit for services no longer needed. Written notice should be sent to [membership@bgctopeka.org](mailto:membership@bgctopeka.org)



## Academic Success

During our SDO Holiday celebration, our Club members teamed up in small groups to create their very own Gingerbread Village. This fun and festive activity encouraged collaboration and creativity as members worked together to design their unique villages. They shared materials like frosting and candy, practiced teamwork by dividing supplies, and even counted and split their pieces to ensure everyone contributed. The result? A joyful experience filled with laughter, teamwork, and plenty of holiday cheer!

## Good Character & Citizenship

At BGCT, safety is our number one priority and that includes internet safety.

During the month of December, Club Members received training through our Digital Citizenship program. We discussed topics such as the importance of not sharing your personal information, recognizing cyberbullying, the rules of internet safety, and more.

By teaching our Members how to identify potential dangers online, and practice respectful digital communication, we aim to empower them as responsible digital citizens, ensuring a safe and positive online experience.

## Healthy Lifestyles

At BGCT, our nutrition department is dedicated to ensuring every Club Member receives healthy, balanced meals that support their growth, development, and overall well-being. We understand the vital role that healthy eating plays in fostering strong bodies and minds, which is why we provide wholesome meals packed with essential nutrients. By prioritizing fresh ingredients and diverse options, we aim to instill healthy eating habits that last a lifetime. Through our meal service program, we not only fuel our members' ability to learn and play but also reaffirm our commitment to their health and future success.







## Specialty Program Highlight

Club members were thrilled to receive a special visit from Kansas Ballet! They enjoyed a reading of *The Story of the Nutcracker* and were treated to an enchanting performance by the Sugar Plum Fairy herself. Our members had the chance to ask her questions and even learned some fun and exciting dance moves! We are incredibly grateful for the amazing community partners we have and the lasting impact they make on our club members and their families. Thank you, Kansas Ballet, for making our day truly magical!



## Member of the Month

Congratulations to Valerie Vásquez Santos for being named Topeka's Youth of the Year! This outstanding achievement reflects your dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment to making a positive impact in your community. Your passion for excellence and leadership serves as an inspiration to others. We are proud of all you've accomplished and look forward to seeing the incredible things you'll continue to achieve. Keep shining brightly—your future is full of limitless possibilities! Good luck, Valerie, in the upcoming state competition!

## Life & Workforce Readiness

A select group of our future Youth of the Year candidates had the unique opportunity to experience the event firsthand through a life and workforce readiness lens in the field of hospitality. These exceptional young leaders actively contributed to the event's success by assisting with setup, warmly escorting guests to their tables, and ensuring the run of show unfolded seamlessly. This hands-on experience allowed them to develop practical skills in event coordination, communication, and problem-solving, all while showcasing the professionalism and dedication that exemplifies the spirit of Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka. Their involvement highlighted the value of combining service with personal growth, preparing them for bright futures ahead.



# Showstoppers in the Community

During the holiday season, our community came together in extraordinary ways to support those who need us most, embodying the true spirit of giving. A shining example was the Topeka 20/30 Club's Annual Christmas 4 Kids event, a heartwarming tradition that uplifts our youth by granting them the joy of shopping for their Christmas wishes with the guidance of incredible role models. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mayor Padilla, Walmart, and Heartland Coca-Cola for their unwavering generosity and support, which made this year's event especially memorable. Their contributions remind us that when we come together, we create moments of joy and hope that resonate far beyond the holiday season.



## What's Happening Next Month?

**Monday, February 3rd** - SDO for USD 501  
**Thursday, February 13th** - SDO USD 450/437  
**Friday, February 14th** - SDO USD 450/437  
**Monday, February 17th** - SDO USD 450/501  
**Tuesday, February 18th** - SDO USD 450  
**Wednesday, February 19th** - USD 437 Early Release  
**Thursday, February 20th** - SDO USD 345  
**Friday, February 21st** - SDO USD 345

## Community Resources

January 1, 2025, KanCare, the Kansas state health program, replaced Aetna Better Health of Kansas with Healthy Blue. This change does not affect your eligibility for KanCare or access to services. If you were enrolled with Aetna, you will automatically transition to Healthy Blue. Provider lists can be found on each plan's website:

- Healthy Blue: [healthyblue.com](https://www.healthyblue.com)
- Sunflower Health Plan: [sunflowerhealthplan.com](https://www.sunflowerhealthplan.com)
- United Healthcare: [uhcommunityplan.com](https://www.uhcommunityplan.com)

If you prefer a different plan, follow the enrollment form steps. After the choice period ends, your assigned plan remains until the next open enrollment period.

### Extra Benefits for Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka Members

- Sunflower Health Plan: \$50 reimbursement per child for annual Club membership.
- United Healthcare: \$100 reimbursement per child for annual Club membership.
- Healthy Blue Kansas:
  - \$75 gift card per child (5-18 years) for Club membership or similar programs (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, YMCA).
  - \$200 gift card per child (5-17 years) for summer camp enrollment, contingent on a completed well visit.

For help or alternative formats, contact KanCare at 1-866-305-5147 (TDD/TTY 1-800-766-3777), Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

**Be sure to update our member insurance information in your parent portal to receive the BGC Benefits!**



# Contact Information

## Amy Erickson

VP of Operations Talent & Culture  
amy Erickson@bgctopeka.org  
785-380-1269

## Brianna Brooks

VP of Program Management & Quality Assurance  
briannabrooks@bgctopeka.org  
785-600-8465

## Ciarra Kendrick

Senior Club Director - Adams  
ciarakendrick@bgctopeka.org  
785-600-8960

## Catherine Turner

West Area Director  
westareadirector@bgctopeka.org  
785-580-7769

## Dave Marshall

North Area Director  
NAD@bgctopeka.org  
785-600-1042

## Amber Gierstorf

Tecumseh Area Director  
TAD@bgctopeka.org  
785-559-1433

## Isaiah DeClerck

Teen Services Director  
teendirector@bgctopeka.org  
785-559-1952

## Membership

Membership Management Director  
membership@bgctopeka.org  
785-234-5601

