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“That changed everything. We had to literally pivot overnight because of all the restrictions, operating as emergency childcare and figuring out how we do this whole distance learning thing,” he said. “The point was that we needed to hold off a little bit. Whoever we brought into the situation, we needed to make sure we’ve set that person up for success.”

The club committed to adapting to the pandemic, getting authorization last summer to offer emergency childcare.

“We’ve had both the Teen Center and the Elementary Program open since June. We had pivoted from a half-day operation to a whole day, 10 hours a day, and went right into our summer program,” Trent said.

When the school year began, BGCWLC opened for a full day, using a program called PACE — Prepare Kids for Academic Success Through Collaboration and Enrichment.

“Finally, in September, we saw some of the businesses were starting to reopen. Parents had to go back to work,” Trent said. “PACE is an all-day program that allowed our staff to help children with their distance learning activities in the morning while engaging in traditional club activities in the afternoon.”

In the meantime, the club continued as an emergency childcare center, prioritizing first responders and essential workers.

“We’re still operating in that mode and will continue to operate in that mode until the governor’s order is lifted, which will be at least May. And it would not be surprising to see that extended even further,” Trent said.

The club is also in the fourth year working with Oregon Community Foundation and The Ford Family Foundation’s K-12 Student Success: Out-of-School Time Initiative.

“We’ve been working with internal and external assessments, looking at our program quality and making sure that all the things that we need to do to impact youth in our community are in place,” Trent said. “The journey has really elevated the programs.”

One of the things the initiative has focused on has been addressing the requirements for the club’s special needs kids.

Trent gave some demographics for BGCWLC:

- 43 percent of the club families make less than \$30,000 and 50 percent make less than \$40,000
- 50 percent of families are single parents
- 8 percent are grandparents raising grandkids
- 8 percent are single parents, living with grandparents
- 10 percent of the families are foster families
- 20 percent of the kids have special needs

“This is in Florence, this is our kids,” he said.

BGCWLC has worked to improve transitions for the kids and making sure curriculum meets the needs of every club member.

“The other big thing was how to make sure that our teens that come to the BGC have a voice in what we’re doing,” Trent said. “Making sure that they have the right kind of skills, the coping skills and life skills, so that they have a voice as they go into the community. Because these are our future teachers, doctors, bankers and newspaper editors. We want to set them up for success.”

Each teen has a job they do, where they get paid with Club Bucks for BGCWLC’s Club Store.

“We’re teaching them the value of earning and we’re also giving them the finan-

cial literacy skills that they need to have,” Trent said.

BGCWLC’s programs are creating a framework for young people 6 to 18 “to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens by providing stimulating and challenging programs through interaction with dedicated, caring

the things he needs to learn about the kids, the organization and the board. I’ll be there to help him through that.”

Pleasant also underwent an interview of sorts with club members, who swarmed him immediately, according to Trent.

“Chuck, the staff and the

of hard work and through some challenges, but it’s a great place to be.”

Most recently, Pleasant has been the executive director of Agathos International, based in Everett, Wash., though he has lived and worked across the U.S. and in over 20 countries. He has worked with youth in a number of capacities, including with an orphanage and with foster children, as well as with veterans and other underserved populations.

Additionally, he has served as a leadership coach, business consultant and adjunct professor for multiple universities. He has bachelor and master degrees of business administration in international business, as well as a master’s degree in ministry. His education has focused on organizational development and economic development.

“So much of your community development, if you’re doing it right, starts with kids,” Pleasant said.

This was essential to BGCWLC’s decision in selecting him, Trent said, especially Pleasant’s past work in creating a program to build tiny homes and increase vocational opportunities for youth aging out of foster care.

“If you’re going to break that cycle of poverty, and right now we have generational poverty around us, then you’ve got to start with the kids. You’ve got to give

them the life skills. And the next logical step is workplace readiness,” Trent said. “We’re really impressed with Josiah’s ability to drive what he does in his profession, and focus on economic development, which dovetails so nicely into what we’re trying to do in this community and create jobs for our kiddos.”

Pleasant said, “It’s a passion of mine to really see a community transformed by positively impacting kids, providing opportunities that they might not have otherwise, providing both community and family. That’s a personal passion for me.”

Pleasant is also bilingual, which will be an asset as the club’s demographics have shifted to include more Spanish-speaking families.

Trent also thinks Pleasant will be a good role model for the kids, especially with his dedication to education.

“That helps our kids prepare for a college or vocational training,” Trent said. “We have a built-in mentor that is unique and has lived the university experience for the last 16 years. You couldn’t get a better advantage for our kids than that one.”

For Pleasant, “I think education done well is a personal experience. It’s sharing your life and it’s bringing what you’ve learned to the table in a real and understandable way for the kids that you’re working with. ... Really, a teacher is a mentor and an opportunity for me to serve and to give.”

For more information about the club and its services, visit www.bgcwlc.org.

“Chuck, the staff and the board have done a fantastic job of creating a family atmosphere. The kids truly function as an extended family unit. Actually, during my time there, we had a couple of new members on-boarded. Watching the kids surround those folks coming in really spoke of how close they are. When a child joins the BGCWLC in Florence, they’re welcomed with open arms, not just by the staff, but by the kids. That was very evident. And they welcomed me.”

— **Josiah A. Pleasant, new CEO of Boys and Girls Clubs of Western Lane County**

people,” according to the club’s mission.

“That’s why when we looked at finding the next CEO, we wanted to make sure that we had somebody who had those skills and had a commitment to improving constantly,” Trent said.

He and Pleasant first connected eight months ago through the hiring process, and they have been in consistent contact ever since. The new CEO will continue to undergo training for the next 18 months, which will culminate in an advanced leadership program.

“You don’t just throw a CEO in an organization that’s dealing with the kids that we have in our community — and then expect that they’re just going to figure it out,” Trent said. “I’ll go back on the board and be his coach and his mentor, helping him through the onboarding process and all

board have done a fantastic job of creating a family atmosphere,” Pleasant said. “The kids truly function as an extended family unit. Actually, during my time there, we had a couple of new members on-boarded. Watching the kids surround those folks coming in really spoke of how close they are. When a child joins the BGCWLC in Florence, they’re welcomed with open arms, not just by the staff, but by the kids. That was very evident. And they welcomed me.”

He said the kids were sweet and funny as they asked him questions.

“It was a warm welcome to a tight-knit group that was very family oriented,” Pleasant said. “That’s really the goal, from an organizational standpoint — to create a safe, uplifting encouraging atmosphere. That is the result that has been created through a lot

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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

JJ NEECE SENIOR FOOTBALL

HIGHLIGHT:
The Sports Club, the Siuslaw News and Coast Radio Sports congratulate Mapleton senior QB/LB **JJ Neece** as this week’s Athlete of the Week. In Saturday’s game against Chiloquin Neece scored a total of 6 touchdowns, 5 on offense with 7 carries for 157 yards and scored one touchdown on an interception from the linebacker position. Neece also had 10 tackles, caused 3 fumbles and had 3 sacks in Mapleton’s rout of the Panthers.

Honorable Mention: Chad Hughes - Siuslaw Cross Country

Highlight:
Honorable mention goes to Siuslaw Viking Cross Country runner Chad Hughes who overcame two falls in last week’s 5000 meter race to place third overall with a time of 17:09.95. Coach Chris Johnson says Chad is an incredible athlete and has made many strides since finishing 8th last year at district.

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