

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Newly Merged Boys & Girls Club of Polk County Announces
Appointment of Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Giordano**

POLK COUNTY, FL - The Boys & Girls Clubs of Lakeland & Mulberry and the Citrus Center Boys & Girls Clubs announced today that they will be merging to form the Boys & Girls Club of Polk County, effective March 1, 2019. Championed by both organizations' boards of directors, as well as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, this strategic merger will enable the Boys & Girls Club to offer better programs and greater opportunities to more children in Polk County. The merged organizations will continue to operate Clubs in Lakeland, Winter Haven, Haines City, Lake Wales and Mulberry, and have plans to extend their services even further throughout the county.

The newly formed organization will be led by CEO Stephen Giordano, who was hired on January 7, 2019 following an extensive nationwide search that included more than 250 candidates. Mr. Giordano is a seasoned, for-profit executive who has carried out mergers, managed large teams and grown revenue in a variety of c-suite and senior executive roles at major retailers including Macy's, Kane's, The Room Place and, most recently, Metro Mattress in upstate New York. Giordano currently resides in Brandon and is in the process of moving to Polk County. Long-time executive directors Curtis Reddick and Rex Perry will remain with the organization.

The merged organization will be led by a new board of directors consisting of representatives of both organizations. Chris Asbill, from Lakeland, and Kerry Wilson, from Winter Haven, will act as initial co-chairs of the board. "We had a choice to make," said Asbill, speaking on behalf of the Club's board of directors and staff. "We could continue operating as two separate organizations, limited by our resources and our reach. Or, we could join forces to transform the lives of young people across our entire community on a much larger scale. We hired Steve because he's a mission-driven leader with the business experience and vision to help us do just that." Wilson added, "As the challenges to our kids continue to grow, both boards knew it was time to transform how we serve those children and to take our performance to another level."

Donors may still allocate gifts for specific programs if they wish to do so, but as a unified organization, the Boys & Girls Club of Polk County is now in a position to invest in the county's future like never before. According to Wilson, "Giordano's primary role will be to organize financial and strategic resources for the Clubs and to make sure that support is most effectively delivered to our kids."

Today, the Boys & Girls Club of Polk County serves more than 1,900 children and teens, with daily average attendance at its eight locations exceeding 750 youth per day. Many come from single-parent, working households, and 90 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch at their schools. The Boys & Girls Club provides after-school transportation to the Clubs, where children benefit from character-enriching programs, academic support and caring adult mentors dedicated to shaping their futures as productive citizens. The new organization intends to add vocational training (in both the construction trades and computer sciences) to its offerings.

According to Club officials, many kids arrive at the Clubs each day hungry. "It's very difficult to learn and succeed academically if you're hungry. We hope to extend the food program at our Lakeland locations to all of our Clubs, so that kids can focus on enriching activities after school, rather than worrying about their next meal," said Asbill.

There will be no disruption in service or programming for those who currently attend as the merger takes effect. "In the immediate future, it's a name-change for those we already help," said Giordano, "but for the underserved in the county's outlying areas, we offer hope that comes from a judgment-free zone of acceptance, nurturing and guidance!"

"In five years, I see the Boys & Girls Club as a leading advocate for the youth of Polk County," said Giordano. "We intend to upgrade our facilities and enhance staff training in order to give kids an even safer place to feed their minds, bodies and spirits. We'll have access to grants that propel us forward without restricting our mission. We'll have everything it takes to nurture the potential of those who will lead and inspire this community. We mean it when we say, for all kids, especially those who need us the most, that Great Futures Start Here!"

To support our new organization, please visit <http://www.bgcpolk.org/donate-now>.

For more information, please contact:

www.bgcpolk.org

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