Michael Phelps Foundation and Nemours Children's Health Provide Mental Health Program for Kids During COVID-19

In honor of World Mental Health Day, Michael Phelps Foundation reaches more than 50,000 children with social-emotional curricula through Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

South Portland, ME / Wilmington, DE (October 11, 2021)– During the coronavirus pandemic, the Michael Phelps Foundation and Nemours Children's Health collaborated to provide their mental health program -- IM Healthy -- to 174 Boys & Girls Clubs of America across the United States and reached more than 50,000 children. IM Healthy is grounded in emotion science and best practices in pediatrics, psychology, child development, parenting, and social-emotional learning (SEL).

"Mental health is just as important as physical health, and we are proud to provide knowledge and tools to help build basic emotional skills that every child needs," said Michael Phelps, Founder and Board President. "Thanks to our partners at Nemours Children's Health and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, we have been able to provide social-emotional lessons to Clubhouses and let them know it's ok to not feel ok all the time."

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"The pandemic has been an incredibly challenging time for kids," says Meghan Walls, PsyD, child and adolescent psychologist at Nemours Children's Health. "Many of the simple joys of childhood like seeing friends at school and playing on the playground were taken away and many kids didn't know how to cope. However, there are many factors that can lead to resilience during childhood as well. Adults often worry that by talking about difficult topics with kids, it may make them feel worse – but we know it actually helps them feel better."

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, emerging data from the pandemic suggests that many children are experiencing an increase in stress and other mental health concerns, including symptoms of anxiety and depression. Additionally, a meta-analysis of 29 studies, including more than 80,000 youth globally, cites that the prevalence of depression and anxiety symptoms during COVID-19 have doubled, compared with pre-pandemic estimates (JAMA Pediatrics).

"We know that the pandemic has impacted all children, but children of color have been affected more so than any other demographic," says Roger Harrison, PhD, child and adolescent psychologist at Nemours Children's Health. "Helping kids to identify their feelings and how to talk about these strong emotions is the foundation to building lifelong skills. For many kids, isolation was met with also losing loved ones. Having empathy and learning to be a good friend to others – and also to themselves – can make a big difference in how kids see the world."

"During these especially tough times, our kids' emotional wellness was a top priority," said Boys and Girls Clubs Vice President, Frank Sanchez. "The IM Healthy social-emotional learning program has been invaluable to our Clubhouses. The commitment and support of Michael and his Foundation provides Boys & Girls Clubs with a life skills curriculum that is valuable and easy to implement."

In addition, IM Healthy was shared globally through program partner Nemours KidsHealth in the Classroom with nearly than 30,000 downloads by educators since the COVID-19 lockdown in Spring 2020.

Parents and educators can have peace of mind sharing Nemours KidsHealth.org's doctor-approved content – forkids and teens – on how to have a positive mindset, be resilient, and foster healthy relationships.

Note: All information on KidsHealth in the Classroom and the IM Program is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

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About Michael Phelps Foundation

The Michael Phelps Foundation (MPF) is focused on promoting water safety, healthy living, and the pursuit of dreams, especially for children. Founded in 2008, MPF has provided learn-to-swim, healthy living, and goal-setting programming to more than 100,000 children and young adults around the world through strategic partnerships with the Boys & Girls Club of America, Special Olympics International, and the Level Field Fund. For more information, please visit: http://www.michaelphelpsfoundation.org

About Nemours Children's Health

Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of nearly 75 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, Nemours KidsHealth.org.

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit Nemours.org

About Boys & Girls Clubs of America

For more than 150 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA.org) has enabled young people most in need to achieve great futures as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Today, more than 4,700 Clubs serve over 4.7 million young people through Club membership and community outreach. Clubs are located in cities, towns, public housing and on Native lands throughout the country, and serve military families in BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide. They provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun and friendship, and high-impact youth development programs on a daily basis during critical non-school hours. Club programs promote academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles. In a Harris Survey of alumni, 54 percent said the Club saved their lives. National headquarters are located in Atlanta. Learn more about Boys & Girls Clubs of America on Facebook and Twitter.

For further information: Michael Phelps Foundation - Drew Johnson, Drew.johnson@octagon.com; Nemours KidsHealth.org - Nancy D'Argenio, Nancy.DArgenio@nemours.org

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