

ClubNotes



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF TRENTON & MERCER COUNTY

WINTER 2008



Traditional Boys & Girls Club Programs Dovetail Community's Goals for Youth

GATHERING FORCES – State and local leaders exchanged ideas on the needs of inner city youths at a public forum presented by Boys & Girls Clubs of New Jersey and sponsored by Comcast and PSE&G. Discussions centered on the importance of community-wide involvement in preventing delinquency. Panelists included (left to right) Joe Bisicchia, Comcast Newsmaker host who served as moderator; Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer; Dr. Robert J. Reid, associate professor of family and child studies at Montclair University; Felix A. Rouse, CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of Newark; Maj. Wendy Galloway of the New Jersey State Police gang prevention unit; and Superior Court Judge Lisa Thornton, former chief of staff in the Attorney General's Office.

With fresh infusions of financial support from a wide variety of sources, the Boys & Girls Club of Trenton has stepped up its efforts to help prevent at-risk youth from engaging in delinquent activities. New programs target youth who are tempted to participate in gang activity by implementing proven techniques and strategies that direct at-risk youths into positive Boys & Girls Club alternatives.

"Every day at the Boys & Girls Club, I hear and see how important it is for our kids to have a safe place to go after school," says David E. Anderson, executive director. "Between the hours of 3 and 8 p.m., teens are most at risk of becoming involved in crimes, either as victims or participants," he adds.

The Club's efforts to increase its targeted outreach began by mobilizing community support. Civic leaders and staff members gathered for several months to discuss local gang issues. These meetings produced a community-grounded strategy that is being implemented in Trenton.

Through a referral network with courts, police, juvenile agencies, schools, social service agencies, and community organizations, as well as through direct outreach efforts, young people identified as at-risk are recruited and "mainstreamed" into Boys & Girls Club programs as a diversion from anti-social activities. Youths between the ages of six and 18 are included.

After youths are identified, professional staff members assess their interests and match them with

staff members to ensure that they establish goals and track progress on a monthly basis.

Areas of interest include school performance, family relationships, Club participation, and possible involvement with the juvenile justice system.

"It's an intensive process; we now have professional staff members performing case management with these youths," notes Anderson. "They meet with school officials, track attendance, and monitor school records. They also confer with families about how their kids are doing," he adds.

Among the community partners referring youths to the Boys & Girls Club are the Trenton Board of Education, the Trenton Police Department, and the mayor's office of employment and recreation.

During a public forum at the Boys & Girls Club, panelist and Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer, stated, "This project must grow from the grass roots level up, because what's more precious than our young people?"

Community leaders meet monthly at the Boys & Girls Club to discuss local issues and to improve upon their prevention strategies.

Among the significant contributors to the Boys & Girls Club's targeted outreach program are Boys & Girls Clubs of America, NJ Department of Children and Families, NJ Department of Community Affairs, and PSE&G.



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MISSION STATEMENT

To inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.



Holiday Times Appeal Reaps Many Blessings

The Times



GOOD FUN – Employees of Jack Morton Exhibits capped off their holiday celebrations by touring the Boys & Girls Club and by making a \$5,256 donation. The group sponsored an auction in conjunction with their holiday festivities and raised an “incredible” sum for Club kids.

More than 500 supporters – many of them new to the Boys & Girls Club Movement – donated nearly \$75,000 through the annual holiday campaign of The Times of Trenton.

“I can’t thank The Times and its readers enough for the outpouring of support,” said David E. Anderson, executive director. “The funds help more kids benefit from our programs. And, we have been swamped with offers of help since The Times ran stories about the Boys & Girls Club.”

The daily newspaper published feature articles about the Boys & Girls Club over a six-week period and encouraged readers to donate in support of the Club.

In addition to those who made personal donations, several groups of supporters conducted fund-raisers and giving initiatives. Among them were the employees of Jack Morton Exhibits in Robbinsville who held a silent auction that netted over \$5,000; a benefit concert by the Ernie White Band at Katmandu that raised almost \$6,000; and the office of Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes which banded together to present the Club with an \$1,800 gift.

Numerous area corporations, foundations, and civic groups also made generous gifts to The Times Holiday Appeal.

The newspaper’s campaign was supported with public service announcements on Comcast Cable. Web site links to the daily newspaper stories and the television commercials were made available through our web site by Stonehouse Media.

To request a booklet of articles that appeared in The Times, please send an email request to info@bgctrenton.org or call 609-392-3191 ext 15.

Club Names Evonne Williams Community Engagement Lead

Individuals who want to make a difference in the lives of Boys & Girls Club members now have someone special to guide their efforts.

Evonne Williams, associate teen services director, has assumed the additional role of community engagement director. In her new position, Williams coordinates the needs of the Boys & Girls Club and matches them with prospective volunteers’ skills and interests.

Orientation sessions are being scheduled to take place monthly on Saturdays at the Boys & Girls Club on Centre Street. Trained volunteers then will be able to choose whether to work at the Club or at one of its school-based program

sites in Trenton.

“We want to enrich everyone’s experience,” says Williams. “This includes the program staff who the volunteers support, the kids who will get to form new relationships, and the volunteers themselves.”

Persons and groups interested in volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club can call Evonne at 609-392-3191 ext. 18 or email ewilliams@bgctrenton.org.



SWING FOR KIDS

Monday, June 30, 2008

New Location!

Springdale Golf Club, Princeton

Sponsorships Are Available

Call 609-392-3191 ext 16 for information



“Lifeguard Lady” is Long-Time Member

Stephanie Cilento is only 23 but she already has been associated with the Boys & Girls Club of Trenton as a volunteer, member, and employee for 10 years. Stephanie is best known as the “lifeguard lady” because when she climbs on to her lifeguard bench this summer, it will be her eighth consecutive season on the job.

It all started in the eighth grade when – at the invitation of a friend – she started helping the “younger” children with their homework. She describes this work as “instant gratification” and notes, “They were so open to my help and told me the next day if I was helpful.”

While she was volunteering, Stephanie joined other teens to form a Keystone Club. At around the same time, Reggie Coleman (associate executive director) joined the staff and sought to reinvigorate the flagship service program for teens. With Reggie as its advisor, this small but dedicated group competed in numerous regional and national Keystone conferences and won many awards.

“Keystoning helped to make me into what I am today,” Stephanie says. “I had a lot of experiences that I would not have if it were not for Keystone. I still keep in touch the friends I made here almost 10 years ago. My best

friends today also were in Keystone.”

A graduate of Hamilton West High School, Stephanie is a member of the Class of 2008 at Rowan University. Her major is health and exercise science, and she wants to teach ... but not before she completes one more season of lifeguard duty here at the Boys & Girls Club.



Kerney Grant Used To Upgrade Facility

The James Kerney Foundation of Trenton has awarded the Boys & Girls Club a major gift toward its \$230,000 list of capital projects planned for the coming year. The gift is in addition to a donation by the foundation to the Club last year.

As a result of the gift, the Boys & Girls Club was able to install 7,000 sq. ft. of roofing over its athletic complex, update the lighting system in the gymnasium, and overhaul the heating and air conditioning units.

The Kerney Foundation grant provides substantial support for the Club’s 2008 capital projects which also include renovation of 1,200 sq. ft. of basement space to make room for two new teen classrooms, painting the gymnasium interior walls, and refurbishing several activities rooms in the 50-year-old Centre Street facility.

“We are extremely grateful to the Kerney Foundation for helping the Club serve more kids with better facilities,” says David E. Anderson, executive director.

Club Programs Target ‘Tweens

The Boys & Girls Club of Trenton has a special plan for kids struggling with those awkward years between childhood and adolescence: targeted programs that help them feel welcome and guide them toward responsible adulthood.

Nationally-developed programs including Career Explorers and Torch Club help “tweens,” preteens, and young adolescents ages 11 to 13 develop character and explore career paths.

“There is no better age at which to engage kids in Boys & Girls Club programs,” says Evonne Williams, associate director of teen services. “Kids at this age are receptive to adult leadership – especially if it’s from someone other than their parents.”

Utilizing web sites developed and maintained by Boys & Girls Clubs of America, kids look up their desired careers and then learn about the education requirements, salary, market demand, and lifestyle.

On the social side, most preteen members at the Boys & Girls Club belong to a Torch Club which is a small-group leadership development program for youth ages 11 to 13. Members elect officers and plan and implement their own activities and community service projects.

“Having a place to just talk about what’s bothering them is so important, says Williams. “They are grappling with what seem to them are big choices that will have long-lasting effects on their future.”



Keystone Club Vies For National Prize

Phoenix Keystone, the teen service arm of the Boys & Girls Club of Trenton & Mercer County, earned top honors for its project, “Inside Voices,” at the Northeast Conference of Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) in Pittsburgh last fall. Now, 13 of these teens and their advisors are en route to Anaheim, Calif., to compete for national honors.

The group’s award-winning project is a summary of more than 400 interviews they conducted at Trenton High School and in the community about issues affecting them. Keystone members from across the country were asked to respond to the topic, “Young America Acts: Can You See Us Now?”

“I am pleased to see our Club take advantage of the great programs offered by the national organization,” notes Reginald J. Coleman, associate executive director and a former Keystone advisor. “From my experience, Keystoning gives teens a chance to learn about themselves and meet kids from around the country,” he adds.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF TRENTON & MERCER COUNTY
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National
Youth
of the
Year

SAVE THE DATE!

Trenton Youth of the Year Dinner
Tuesday, March 18, 2008
Educational Testing Service, Princeton
Info at www.bgctrenton.org

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Club Kids Learn Life Skills in 4-H Program

Boys & Girls Club members are learning firsthand the life lessons that working with horses can provide.

Horses and Youth (HAY), a collaboration of Mercer County 4-H and the Mercer County Equestrian Center, has provided more than 20 Boys & Girls Club after-school program participants with unique opportunities that they might not otherwise have had.

Small groups of Club kids travel weekly to the Hopewell center for the six-part program. Each session starts with a quick lesson on horses and their care (safety, colors and markings, breeds, types of feeds, nutrients and digestion, health care and general maintenance). Riding instruction is provided by the equestrian center staff and two Boys & Girls Club volunteers. The youths also get to groom, tack, feed, and wash the horses (and clean the stalls!).

On the last day, participants compete in a "horse show" which includes designing, setting up, and completing a course. They



HORSE PLAY – Club kids have fun and build confidence participating in Horses and Youth (HAY) at Mercer County Equestrian Center in Hopewell. The program is part of the Club's partnership with Mercer County 4-H. Attending to Snippy (the horse) are Lauren Hilton (left), an instructor at the equestrian center; Katie Willoughby, Boys & Girls Club volunteer from Lawrenceville, and three Robbins Annex after-school members of the Boys & Girls Club of Trenton & Mercer County.

are scored on their horsemanship and certificates are awarded.

Katie Willoughby, a Boys & Girls Club volunteer who assists with the equestrian program, is pleased to be involved. "I know from personal experience how enriching being around horses can be. I like combining my desire to help kids and my love of horses."

In addition to the equestrian program, Mercer County 4-H runs a Junior Master Gardener® program and a 4-H Afterschool Adventure series at several of the Club's program sites. Last fall, Chad Ripberger, Mercer County 4-H Agent for Youth Development, was instrumental in securing a \$55,000 grant for the Boys & Girls Club through the JCPenney Afterschool Fund and the National 4-H Council.

The equestrian program also is sponsored in part by a grant from the Dorothy E. Katz Reading and Recreation Fund at the Princeton Area Community Foundation.