

Boys & Girls Club Provides Vital Resources for Quad-Cities Young People

Written by Mark McLaughlin
Monday, 16 December 2013 14:33

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The Lagomarcino's Cocoa Beano 5K Hot Chocolate Run, held in Moline, raised \$9,000 for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley.

IA/IL QUAD CITIES – Steve Howard, 52, is a single grandfather who has adopted and is raising his five grandchildren. He takes pride in his grandkids and encourages their interests. And like any good parent, he wants his children to be able to spend time with friends in a safe social setting. For Steve's kids, the Boys and Girls Club is a place that fills that vital role.

Steve's five grandchildren live with him in his Davenport home: four granddaughters, Fantayshia, 14; Eunesheah, 12; Timeah, 11; and Timeka, 10, and one grandson, Brandon, 13.

"I don't want the kids in the house more than I am, just watching TV," Steve said. "The Boys & Girls Club is a safe place with

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supervision where the kids can go right after school. When I'm at work, it's good to know they are at the Club, learning among their friends."

Steve Howard was born in Hannibal, Missouri, and raised in Peoria, Illinois. When circumstances made it necessary for the children to have a new home, Steve and his wife welcomed all five into their lives. When Steve and his wife divorced two years later, he continued to raise the children by himself. He has been doing it for ten years and along the way, he adopted them. "I've been raising the youngest since she was six months old," he said.

All five children are members of the Lutheran church. The oldest, Fantayshia, attended a National Lutheran Youth Convention this summer. All of Steve's children have their own unique interests. Eunesheah plays the clarinet and piano. Timeka plays violin and sings in the chorus. Timeah enjoys Lego Robotics and plays the trumpet. Fantayshia is in her school's Drama Club and Brandon is into basketball. "It's important that they pursue interests they like," Steve said. "They get good grades and their interests really keep them focused."

Steve's grandchildren have all attended the Boys & Girls Club's Davenport Club, located in the First Presbyterian Church on Iowa Street. Steve sees the Davenport Club as a valuable addition to their formal education. "The Club provides scheduled, organized activities," he said. "They can play games, work on the computers there, and even get help with their homework."

Steve noted that his family is only one of many in the community that benefit from the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley. "I know a lot of the other families in the area whose children go to the Club," he said. "Most people don't realize how many families are helped by the Club. There are hundreds and they are all very grateful."

A Look Back at 2013

According to Tim Tolliver, Chief Professional Officer of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley, 2013 was a busy year for their organization. "We maintain a regular schedule of fundraising events to help meet the needs of young people, like Steve Howard's kids and many others," Tim said.

Tim noted that the efforts of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley help many families having difficulty making ends meet. "Across the Quad-Cities, there are young people who don't always have enough to eat," he said. "Many have no one to greet them when they come home from school. Some have no idea what the future holds for them, so they turn to gangs or crime, hoping to find answers there. These young people need more options for their future. They need the support and guidance of the Boys & Girls Clubs."

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This year's fundraising events started with the 2013 Golf Outing in July at Short Hills Country Club in East Moline. "The support of Group O and all our other sponsors make this year's event a real success," Tim said.

In September, the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley held a ribbon-cutting for The Club, a new Teen Center located in the Floreciente neighborhood at 1122 5th Ave., Moline, and celebrated with two days of public events, including a Reception and a special Day for Kids. "The ribbon-cutting was a memorable event for the community and our organization," Tim said. "It represented the culmination of years of hard work and planning."

The Lagomarcino's Cocoa Beano 5K Hot Chocolate Run, held in Moline this October also proved successful, raising \$9,000 for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley. "We had an awesome course and sunny skies," Tim said, "as well as hot chocolate and Lago's famous Turtle candy at the finish line. A big 'Thank you!' goes to the Lagomarcino family for sponsoring several of our Club members who participated in their first 5K race through the 'Race For Great Futures' initiative. The money provided by Lagomarcino's is greatly appreciated."

At the 2013 Steak & Burger Dinner, held in November at the iWireless Center in Moline, key volunteers were recognized for the assistance they provide to the Boys & Girls Clubs. "We appreciate the time and skills our faithful volunteers provide," Tim said. "They make it possible for us to meet many of our objectives while staying within our budget."

Tim stated that the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley is deeply appreciative of the time, funds and support provided by the community. "We thank everyone for their help," Tim said, "and we hope the community will continue to remember the Boys & Girls Clubs as they consider their options for charitable giving this holiday season. The membership fees for the Davenport and Moline Clubs are \$12 per year, and the fee for the Teen Center in Moline is \$25 per year, but no child has ever been turned away because of a lack of funds. Also, those membership fees do not cover the majority of expenses. The actual cost of helping one child for a year is about \$1,000. When you give to the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley, you are investing in the future of the Quad-Cities."

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley, as a chartered member of Boys and Girls Clubs of America, is a tax-exempt organization, duly qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and contributions are tax-deductible in accordance with Federal law.

For more information on the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Valley, please call [\(309\) 757-5777](tel:(309)757-5777)

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