

# Kids FIRST



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN

## Kids gain leadership skills and help in the community

More than 100 Club members attended Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan's annual Youth Leadership Conference on Oct. 3, 2009 and did a community service component to help feed the hungry and sort clothing for teens living away from home.

Most of the kids who participated belong to B&GCSM's teen clubs: the Torch Club (ages 11 to 13) and the Keystone Club (ages 14 to 18). These clubs within a Club perform community service and provide a leadership track. Members elect officers, hold meetings, follow an agenda, and work in teams to achieve goals. These clubs are a microcosm of an adult community service club. They teach kids how to identify needs in the community and work together to help those in need.

The Fauver-Martin Club in Highland Park hosted the Youth Leadership Conference, which was sponsored in part by DTE Energy Foundation. During the morning session, the group helped at these locations:

- Gleaners Community Food Bank – Kids put canned goods and other

food items into pantry boxes for distribution to the hungry. They also put snacks into backpacks for low-income kids who need supplemental food over the weekend.

- Earthworks – A community garden at Gleaners, where kids helped harvest the produce left on the vine for the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.
- Covenant House – Teens sorted donated clothes and personal hygiene products, and organized the master storage closet for these items. (The Covenant House provides for teens and young adults who are runaways or in foster care without a home base. It offers additional services to adults, such as drug counseling.)

Lekita Jones, program coordinator, said, "We are grateful to the three organizations for making this effort work. The teens who participated got a new perspective on how people in this community struggle to survive in these tough economic times." She noted that there is a vast need for the basics: food, shelter and clothing. Kids from



**Youth Leadership Conference**

the Clubs were invited to come back to these organizations as volunteers and many plan to do that.

In the afternoon, the group attended breakout sessions on public speaking, conducted by Dale Carnegie staff volunteers; and team-building, led by a Boys & Girls Clubs of America presenter. All attended a leadership workshop to learn how they can impact their world at school, at work and in the community.

"What the teens learned and did that day will make a lasting impression," said Jones.

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## Clubs are like family in times of need

Throughout the year, many Club members and their families confront a tragic event such as a house fire, home foreclosure, loss of family income, and violent or unexpected death of a loved one. In these cases, they get support from the Clubs.



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Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan (B&GCSM) has 13 Clubs in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties. When tragedy strikes, Club directors, professional staff, members and their families respond quickly. They may volunteer their services, donate money or goods, or do other acts of kindness to help stricken Club members and families get back on their feet.

When Delora Williams, the mother of two Wilson Club members became homeless after having to leave their apartment, they didn't know where to go. To make matters worse, it was at the start of the school year and her children were in middle school and high school.

*(Continued on page 2)*

[www.bgcsm.org](http://www.bgcsm.org)

248.473.1400

## Two new national programs will help our Clubs reduce the high dropout rate

By Len Krichko, President & CEO

**In our effort to help kids graduate from high school, I attended America's Promise Alliance's "Grad Nation Action Forum" in Washington, D.C., in September – for the second time in two years. Detroit leads the nation for high school dropouts and was one of 12 cities identified by America's Promise Alliance as having the highest dropout rates.**



To reverse this troubling trend, the Alliance launched the Dropout Prevention Campaign in April 2008 to provide a framework for cities and states to address the issue through summits and targeted programs. The Alliance convened a coalition of educational organizations, community leaders and nonprofit agencies at its first summit in Fall 2008.

America's Promise Alliance, founded by General Colin Powell, is the nation's largest partnership providing support to young people through a cross-sector of more than 300 corporations, nonprofits – including B&GCSM, faith-based organizations and advocacy groups seeking to improve the lives of children.

Since attending the summit, B&GCSM has forged partnerships with community-based agencies, schools and foundations to tackle the high dropout rate in metropolitan Detroit. At present, 90% of our Club members graduate from high school (Detroit and other high schools), compared to a reported 58% graduation rate among Detroit high school students.

A safe place to go after school, our 13 Clubs provide a range of mentoring, homework assistance, leadership opportunities and health, fitness and nutrition programs geared to youth ages 6 to 18 (1-12th grades).

We were selected to be one of 10 pilot sites of Boys & Girls Clubs of America for its "Be Great: Graduate" program: a five-year national effort that tracks 50 at-risk students in 4th to 8th grade at four of our sites. We plan to recruit 100 such students and offer the program at the Wilson Club in Auburn Hills, the Belleville Club, the Wertz Club in Shelby Twp., and the Huron Valley Club in Ypsilanti. Our professional staff conducts a program that includes best practices from leaders in the field, and also mentors students to help them stay in school and graduate. If the pilot is successful, we will expand the program to all of our sites.

Since we serve 26,000 kids annually in the nation's most economically devastated area, we must be part of the solution. By recruiting more teens to join our Clubs, we can provide the mentoring and support these kids need to succeed. To help kids graduate, you can contribute to our Annual Appeal (see page 4 for details) and make a lasting difference in the life of a child. We do a world of good as **"The Positive Place for Kids!"**

## Wilson Club repairs completed

Keeping our 13 Clubs in good shape requires ongoing repairs and renovation. This fall, the Wilson Club in Auburn Hills had extensive repairs made to an exterior wall that had water damage and the drainage system was upgraded. The gym was repainted along with the entire exterior. The repairs were made possible by a \$40,000 grant from the Matilda R. Wilson Fund. The late Mrs. Wilson was a longtime benefactor of this namesake Club.

## Campus visits help kids plan for higher education & careers

Our College Bound Success Tour program introduces Club members – the majority from economically disadvantaged households – to area colleges and universities. The program, funded by the Herbert and Elsa Ponting Foundation, helps kids envision future educational pursuits and shows them how to plan to achieve this goal.



"We want to inspire youth to continue their education following high school," said Patrice Dickens, who directs the college tour program and is the Diehl Club director.

Throughout the year, more than 100 youth (ages 11 to 18) from the Clubs toured the campuses of six different schools, including: Marygrove College, University of Michigan, University of Toledo, Adrian College and Rochester College.

In March 2009, many Club members attended the Black Colleges Fair in Detroit to meet with representatives from 35 such higher education institutes in the U.S. The teens also attended sessions on preparing for college, learned about admission requirements and financial aid, and talked to members of sororities and fraternities.

"The experience of being on campuses large and small, public and private, had a big impact on the kids," said Chris Kyles, program coordinator. "The exposure to the whole college experience changed many kids' attitude about going to college and they are making plans to attend."

A survey of participants who took the college tour showed that they gained a better understanding of what college-prep classes they needed to take in high school; what Grade Point Average (GPA) is required for admission, how scores from ACT and SAT exams affect college placement and financial aid, and what job categories have the best potential for hiring in the next five to 10 years.

Clubs... *continued from page 1*

The family spent some time living in a relative's basement and trying to get into a shelter, which was full. While Ms. Williams has a job and can afford the rent, she couldn't afford the other costs associated with moving. When a board member heard of their plight, he anonymously donated money for the move to a new apartment. Both children are known beyond their own Clubs – the 16-year-old boy was a Youth of the Year runner-up and the 11-year-old girl was an ambassador at the Charity Preview. Ms. Williams and her children are grateful to those at the Club and Administrative Office who helped obtain this generous gift at a critical time.

In another instance, Malik, a member of the Romulus Club, was badly burned in a grilling accident last fall. His recovery was made easier by his "second family" at the Club, who hosted a potluck dinner just before Thanksgiving and raised money to help Malik and his family with their medical bills and the holiday season.

Last spring, a fire tore through the home of Ron Koester, a custodian at Merriman Elementary, the school that hosts the Romulus Club. When Club members and their families learned of the fire, they held a bake sale. Funds raised at the bake sale were presented to Koester at the Club's Leadership Awards meeting to help his family cope with the aftermath of the fire. "It was very nice of them," Koester said. "We had to move out of our house for 3-1/2 months while it was being repaired. The money helped out quite a bit."

The Clubs' programs and philosophy of "giving back" become ingrained in members' lives. It's another benefit of belonging to a second family at the Clubs.



## Why donate to our 2009 Annual Fund?

Growing up in today's world isn't easy for kids, especially those who live in low-income neighborhoods. They must overcome the risk of becoming a high school dropout (Detroit has the highest such rate in the nation) or being drawn into gang activity, drugs and violence. With a jobless rate of 28.9% in Detroit, the recession's impact on families has been devastating.

At Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan (B&GCSM), youth are given an opportunity to rise above academic, social and economic challenges. By contributing to the 2009 Annual Fund, you are providing an opportunity to those who really need our Clubs.

A \$50 donation covers an annual membership; a gift of \$500 covers the actual cost of providing programs and services to one child. Whether you can give \$10, \$25, \$50, \$500 or more, your gift is an investment in proven programs that have positively impacted the lives of thousands of kids.

Your gift will help kids advance in academics, health and fitness, and character and leadership development. We are **"The Positive Place for Kids!"**

Choose one of three ways to donate:

- 1 Online:** [www.bgcsm.org](http://www.bgcsm.org), go to "Donate" button
- 2 By mail:** Please make your check payable to Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan, and use the enclosed envelope or send your contribution to B&GCSM Administrative Office, 26777 Halsted Rd., Ste. 100, Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3560
- 3 By phone:** Call (248) 473-1400

## Hometown Huddle brings new Lions Den to Diehl Club



Detroit Lions player Larry Foote took part in the three-legged race with Club members during the Hometown Huddle event.

Kids who want to stay fit and perhaps roar like a Lion on the football field someday have more space and equipment to do so in the new Wii fitness room dubbed the "Lions Den," at the Diehl Club in Detroit. The renovation of the former weight room was provided by Hometown Huddle, a joint effort of Detroit Lions Charities and United Way for Southeastern Michigan. It is part of the National Football League's initiative to give back to communities where they play.

During the Oct. 6 Hometown Huddle event, seven Lions players and the team mascot Roary visited the Club. Many of the players got involved with the kids in a jump rope contest, sit-up challenge, kickboxing and other activities. A three-legged race had some of the Lions players with a kid tied to each ankle as they hobbled across the gym to the finish line. It was a great bonding experience. Lions players who attended were: Landon Cohen, Andre Fluellen, Larry Foote, Dan Gronkowski, Marquand Manuel, Ephraim Salaam and Kevin Smith.

"We are grateful for this outstanding community contribution and the outreach from Detroit Lions players," said Len Krichko, president and CEO of B&GCSM. "It means a lot to the kids to meet these players. The new B&GCSM Wii fitness room offers another way for kids to exercise, stay healthy and have fun."

The Lion's Den was painted and carpeted in Detroit Lions colors, and new lighting and a new ceiling were installed. A pair of Wii interactive fitness systems allows kids to practice pitching, swinging and other exercises as they watch how their efforts impact simulated sports games on flat-screen plasma TVs.

## Save the date for Charity Preview

Friday, Jan. 15, 2010

Sign up now to attend the Charity Preview, sponsored by the Detroit Auto Dealers Association, and designate Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan as your charity of choice. This black-tie gala, from 6 to 9 p.m., is the kick-off event for the North American International Auto Show at Cobo Hall. Tickets are \$250 per person (\$240 is tax deductible). For tickets, please call: (888) 838-7500 or visit: [www.charitypreview.com](http://www.charitypreview.com).

## All-out effort to shrink obesity

As children and teens become less physically active and consume more high-fat, high-calorie food in their daily diets, they are at greater risk for obesity and a host of medical, physical and social problems.

A national program called "Triple Play" is being conducted at Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan's 13 Clubs to help turn the tide from obesity toward a healthier lifestyle.

Triple Play helps youth develop a healthy lifestyle and improve their physical fitness so it becomes a way of life. It uses a three-pronged approach that seeks to:

- Increase the number of hours per day that Club members participate in physical activities
- Improve Club members' knowledge of healthy habits and physical fitness
- Strengthen Club members' ability to interact positively with others and engage in healthy relationships.

Each Club can customize the program to members' needs. At the Wertz Club, kids have joined walking groups and are learning about healthy eating. "We want to keep kids active and demonstrate how

healthy habits can positively impact their lives," noted Club Director Katie Williams.

Triple Play bridges the core program areas of "health and life skills" and "sports, fitness and recreation." The first program teaches positive behaviors that nurture children's well-being, encourages them to set personal goals, and guides them in becoming self-sufficient adults. The sports component focuses on fitness, making good use of leisure time, coping with stress, caring for the environment, and developing social skills.

According to a recent high-level report on obesity\*, an estimated 16% of American children are overweight, with a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile. For minority children, this rate is even higher.

A 2005 Michigan Nonprofit Association article noted that Michigan has the third highest rate of obesity in the nation, with about one-third of the state's children being overweight or obese. Triple Play is expected to help stem obesity in the communities served by B&GCSM, which annually reaches 26,000 youth in grades 1 through 12.

\*conducted by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in collaboration with the American Heart Association

