



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF KENOSHA, WISCONSIN

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

STEERING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Although I-94 sometimes links parents in Kenosha, Wisconsin with employment in Chicago and Milwaukee, the interstate can also present a road block to the most important job these parents have: building a promising future for their children. In recent years, the thoroughfare has brought drugs and criminal activity into Kenosha, raising concerns for all families in this small but diverse city.

For the past 14 years, parents have turned to the Boys & Girls Club of Kenosha to help them guide their children down a more secure and stable path as they navigate the challenges of growing up. “Because so many parents in this community face economic and social barriers, their children do as well,” says CEO Wally Graffen. “We want both parents and children to see our Club as a way to a better future and to take advantage of the programs we offer.”



WITH PARENTS' ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT, WE CAN
HAVE SO MUCH OF AN IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF
THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CLUB. IT REALLY TAKES
A WHOLE FAMILY TO FIND SUCCESS.

—Ron Stevens, President, Boys & Girls Club of Kenosha

FAMILIES FINDING SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

B&GC Kenosha has added programs that engage both parents and children to its roster of traditional educational and recreational activities for young people. These family programs address the issues most impacting Kenosha families. “To succeed in helping young people grow in their confidence and decision-making skills, we must be effective in supporting parents,” Graffen says.

The Even Start Literacy Program boosts reading skills for Latino youth, while enrolling their parents in ESL classes focused on parents’ roles as their children’s first teachers. Families United to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and the Making Healthy Choices Conference engage parents and children in discussions about responsibility and life choices.

As these programs expanded, staff saw the need to intervene in more difficult circumstances. The Club’s Circle of Hope program pairs children of federal inmates with trained mentors, who also support parents at home in setting positive examples. For youth experiencing run-ins with the law, yet another initiative partners with parents in helping their children find positive alternatives to delinquent behavior.

B&GCA Kenosha staff also reach out to parents through mutual-help opportunities designed to encourage parents to support one another and their neighbors. These include community-wide dental screenings and clothing drives and events that bring families together, such as potluck dinners, talent shows and a Kids Day Celebration.

The Club continually tries out new strategies to see what will work best for Kenosha families. “We always challenge the staff to draw parents in,” observes Graffen. “Long-term success starts with getting these young people and their parents fully involved.”

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize Club programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.

This year, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) and its vital programs will reach nearly 4.5 million young people and their parents in 3,700 neighborhoods and rural communities. BGCA's professional staff will support and engage parents as their school-age children learn character and leadership development, vocational training, and healthy behaviors and benefit from a wide range of academic and cultural pursuits. "We not only change the trajectory of a young person's life today but also the trajectory of their children's lives tomorrow," says BGCA President Roxanne Spillet. "That's why we call our work family-strengthening and generation-changing."

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Award-winning Program: Family Support Programs

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