Rebirth of Local Boys & Girls Clubs Continues with Fund

These are exciting times for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Illinois. The excitement shows in the refurbished rooms, the fresh coats of paint, and the positive attitude flowing from the Club’s main building on 15th Street that serves the needs of hundreds of children in the Springfield area.

“Over the past year and a half, we have seen our site transformed into a world-class facility for the youth in our community,” said Bill Legge, executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Illinois. “Each and every room at the Club has received a make-over, but the new gymnasium has been, by far, our biggest accomplishment. We now have the best place in town for our members to grow and flourish.”

The Club’s rebirth has been astounding. In January 2013, the Club was almost $600,000 in debt. Fast forward to today, and the Club is on firm financial footing and has undergone a massive renovation program changing the look and vibe of the Club’s facility. The Club welcomed more than 200 community members for an open house in June to celebrate the changes. The rebirth continues with the establishment of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield Foundation Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.
“The Community Foundation is one of the most trusted institutions in Springfield for philanthropic guidance and asset management,” said Legge, who became executive director in 2013. “Its mission closely aligns with ours, and I could not think of anywhere else I would trust more with our long-term investment.”

The Fund’s establishment will continue the Club’s efforts to secure an even sounder financial footing. The Fund’s flexibility will enable the Club to meet whatever needs are necessary at the moment but also pursue more opportunities should they open.

“While our primary focus at the moment is to grow the Fund, eventually it will be used to supplement our operations,” Legge said. “By having a fund at the Community Foundation, we will be able to pursue matching grant opportunities and have better oversight of our assets and reserves should we face an unforeseen financial challenge in the future.”

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Illinois has been serving area children since 1956. Along with operations at its main facility, during the school year, the Club operates nine school-based sites within District 186. The sites include eight elementary schools and one middle school. During the school year more than 1,200 kids a day will utilize the programs. The after-school programs along with the all-year programs at the main facility are part of the Club’s mission to meet the ever-changing and ever-challenging needs of children in today’s society.

“Today in Springfield, more than one in five children don’t know if they’ll have dinner tonight, and just as many are either homeless or at-risk of becoming so. Violent crime is rising and young people need strong adult role models to help them find a path to success,” Legge said. “That’s where we come in, by providing out-of-school time programs and activities for youth aged 6-17 with a deliberate focus on academics, healthy lifestyles and character development. We either build our children or we build more jails. It’s time to stop building jails.”