

Boys & Girls Club Impact Stories

Stories from Mankato Area Residents

After spending six years in Zambia Africa where my father was a missionary, my family moved to Escondido, CA. I was seven years old and American culture was new to me. It required a lot of adjusting. My parents enrolled me in the Escondido Boys and Girls Club which gave me the opportunity to make friends and have positive role models outside of school. Boys and Girls Club helped me develop my social skills and build confidence. I vividly remember participating in Taekwondo, Karate, and soccer at Boys and Girls Club which all helped to shape me into who I am today.



CHRIS HARSTAD

Wells Fargo Home Mortgage



From the time I was 8-15 years old, I attended the Boys and Girls Club in Des Moines, IA. I spent the school year in Mankato with my mother and the summer with my father in Des Moines. Although I may have been the outsider, there was one constant and that was the Boys and Girls Club. I was welcomed every single summer with open arms by the staff and kids. It was the only place in Des Moines that I felt I belonged and had a true connection. It really was my home while I was there. When I was homesick, someone would comfort me, when I needed a friend, the kids were there. I've said it hundreds of times and I'll say it again, the Boys and Girls Club saved my summertime childhood. Since I couldn't be home, I'm glad I had a place like the BAGC to go.

ERIN ROBERTS

YWCA Mankato

The name "LaVarnway" was foreign to me when I first heard it. I soon would say the name with chest-pounding pride, reverence and gratitude. The LaVarnway Boys and Girls Club on the north side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin changed my life. The safe environment, in the midst of, at times, violent surroundings, enabled the many life lessons I learned there. I learned to wait my turn patiently by sitting in "line" to play bumper pool or understanding the importance of teamwork through the club sponsored basketball team or displaying compassion for others modeled by the great mentors and leaders at the club. One mentor, in particular, "Johnny" always checked in on me, asked me how I was doing after a long absence from the club, encouraged me to try new things with the club's guided activities and instructed me to cool out when I was mad after I lost a game of any kind (I was a really sore loser!). Johnny played a mentor role to numerous young men who would come to LaVarnway and set them on the permanent path to a life of success. Thank you LAVARNWAY Boys and Girls Club!



BUKATA HAYES

Greater Mankato Diversity Council



In 1975, I joined the LaCrosse, Wisconsin Boys Club where they started their first girls' softball team. This opportunity opened a whole new world for me that I, previously, only heard about from the neighborhood boys. The Boys Club became so much more to me than a place just to play softball. It offered a variety of activities and enrichment opportunities. I knew there was always someone available to play a game of HORSE, shoot a game of pool or I'd join an activity already in progress. I experienced so many fond memories and friendships, which absolutely helped shape who I am today. In the 1990's it was renamed, Boys and Girls Club, and subsequently became a place of trust, positive influences and strong role models for my own children as well. I know the Boys and Girls Club will, not only change children's lives in Mankato, but truly be the lifesaving opportunity many of our youth deserve.

KARLA LARSON

Community Member