

Opening the Door to Higher Education

THANKS TO A GENEROUS DONATION to The Club for Boys Foundation, one longtime Club member has the help they need to make their dreams of post-secondary education a reality.

Jon Suarez, member of The Club for Boys for 10 years, is the first recipient of the Warder Scholarship. The scholarship, set up by Jo Anna and Robert Warder in 2021, provides a select number of Club members \$1,000 scholarships each year to use towards tuition, housing, books, and other items relating to their education. With 43% of the families that the Club serves living at or below federal poverty guidelines, the scholarship can make the goal of going to college or technical school feel more achievable for many boys that the Club serves.

“ Education beyond high school can be a real game changer for our boys. It means having a job you enjoy rather than one you endure. It means a lifetime of higher pay. ”

—Sara Gentry,
Executive Director of The Club for Boys Foundation



Suarez will use the scholarship to study business and play basketball at Dakota College in Bottineau, ND. A varsity player at Central High School in Rapid City, Suarez spent much of his time at the Club shooting hoops. “He was a wonderful athlete with a positive attitude towards life,” Gentry recalled.

Gentry, along with the Club’s executive director, Doug Herrmann, announced that Suarez was awarded the scholarship by presenting him with a giant check in front of a large group of his Club peers. Gentry remembers it as a very profound moment for both Suarez and the rest of the boys. “You could have heard a pin drop. You could see a lot of wheels turning, especially for the kids that are in sports,” she said. “I’m hoping it will be a motivating factor for them to think more about their own education and give them encouragement that others care and want to support them in their goals for the future.”

Giving the Gift of Christmas

EACH YEAR DURING THE HOLIDAYS, families around the Black Hills gather to celebrate with festive decorations, joyful feasts, gifts, and heartwarming moments spent together. During those special times, it can be easy to forget that there are many families in our area that are struggling to simply keep a roof over their heads and food on the table.

For these families, day-to-day survival can claim all their resources, leaving them with little to no means to join in the festivities. One grandmother had never celebrated Christmas before her three grandsons started attending the Club. “I’m on a fixed income,” she said. “It’s barely enough to cover the monthly bills.”

To bring holiday cheer to members and their families in need, The Club for Boys created the Christmas Family Program in 2006, which pairs individuals and organizations throughout our community with eligible families to provide them with Christmas gifts, decorations, and groceries for a delicious holiday meal.

“People value participating because it’s something they are able to do personally for someone who needs help in our own community,” Sara Gentry, executive director of The Club for Boys Foundation, remarked. “And the touching feedback from families who have participated in the program is the reason the Club continues to offer this program each year.”

In 2022, 69 families of 109 Club for Boys members, equaling a total of 586 people, benefited from the program. The Club is hoping to go even bigger this year, setting a goal of sponsoring 80 families. To qualify, families must have a household income at or below the federal poverty level and have a boy that attends the Club at least 60 days in a school year.

There are two ways to participate in the Christmas Family Program. One is to donate funds which Club staff and volunteers use to purchase all the items. The donation requested this year is \$450 for a family of four. This gift requested is more than last year, but this is the first time in seven years the sponsorship amount has increased. In fact, any amount donated is celebrated and will be combined with other gifts for larger families.

For those looking for a more hands-on way to give back, the Club will send the wish list of a family. This is the perfect opportunity to gather a holiday crew for a fun afternoon of shopping and gift-wrapping for a great cause!



To donate or sponsor a family, contact Sara Gentry at (605) 593-0242 or sarag@theclubforboys.org by December 17.

If sending a check, please make it payable to The Club for Boys, and please note that it is for the Christmas Family Program.

To Gentry, involvement in the program is a win-win. “It brightens the holidays for both the families receiving help, as well as the families giving help,” she said.

Rapid City Club for Boys
320 North 4th Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Return Service Requested

- TheClubForBoys.org
- Facebook.com/TheClubForBoys
- 605-343-3500



Memories and Milestones

At the grand opening of The Club for Boys on November 23, 1963, a line of 125 boys could be seen waiting outside the Club’s first location, an old train depot on Eighth Street in Rapid City...



THE BUGLE



Thank You For Supporting The Club For Boys!

Winter 2023 · Helping all boys meet their needs today, so they can fulfill their potential tomorrow

Bringing Home Holiday Cheer

FOR THE PAST 44 YEARS, the arrival of The Club for Boys’ Christmas tree lot has helped mark the unofficial start of the holiday season. From the time it opens in November until the days preceding Christmas, the lot bustles with families picking out the perfect tree, with Club members on hand to help in the choosing, cutting, carrying, and loading of each purchase. To an onlooker, it may look like an ordinary holiday scene, but for those involved, it is much more.

“People come to our Christmas tree lot to not only get a Christmas tree, but to get Christmas,” Assistant Executive Director Mark Kline explained. “They come for the impactful stories and to see how they’re helping to make a difference for our boys.”

Over the 35 years that Kline has been involved with the Club’s Christmas Tree Program, he has seen it evolve into a means of teaching crucial job skills to members 12 years of age and older. Although the program has helped prepare boys for employment, the values that are taught extend far beyond the workplace. “It builds boys’ self-esteem and helps with people skills,” he remarked.

The program also gives boys some much needed spending money for the holidays. “For some of our boys, this is their Christmas money. They’re asking for extra shifts because they don’t have a lot of money to spend on Christmas,” Kline said.

Kline reflected on one 14-year-old tree seller who used his check from working on the Christmas tree lot last year to help his single mom with their family’s necessities.

“I’m really proud that our boys are responsible like that and are willing to help their families out.”

Many boys participate in the Christmas Tree Program each year they are eligible, making their way from tree seller to crew leader, and, for some, to the top role of lot supervisor. The lifelong memories created by participating in the program result in many members later returning to the lot to shop for a Christmas tree with their own family, extending the beloved tradition to the next generation.

This year, former members of the Club are invited to officially return and lend a hand to the Christmas Tree Program. The Club for Boys Alumni Association will be meeting in the Black Hills to cut, bale, and deliver trees to the Club. “We have so many boys that have had positive memories from the Club and they want to pay it forward,” Kline said. “We’re hoping that the Alumni Association will provide that opportunity to both build comradery and give back.”

For Kline, the Christmas Tree Program is not just about selling trees. “It’s like every program at the Club. It’s fun with a purpose. It’s the teachable moments. It’s the staff interactions. And it’s being there for the kids that need us the most.”

The Club for Boys Christmas tree lot opens on November 20th, 2023, and will stay open until Christmas Eve, or until all trees are sold. A Christmas tree lot will also open at The Club for Boys’ Thrift Store on November 24th, 2023.



TREE LOT HOURS

The Club for Boys Location
Monday - Saturday: 9:00am – 7:00pm
Sunday: 10:00am – 5:00pm

The Thrift Store Location
Monday - Friday: 9:00am – 6:00pm
Saturday: 9:00am – 5:00pm

The Club offers custom cut Black Hills Spruce. Call (605) 343-3500 and talk to Mark to reserve your custom cut tree!

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Cheers to

60 YEARS



SINCE OPENING ITS DOORS IN 1963, The Club for Boys has undergone many changes to enable it to effectively serve the needs of its members. Relocations and expansions have taken place, program offerings have substantially increased, and revenue streams have been added that benefit both the Club and the Black Hills community. However, over the past 60 years, one thing has remained the same – the core fundamentals that have shaped the Club and its members.

“So much of what The Club for Boys was founded on in those early years, what we like to call the “nuts and bolts”, are still what we adhere to today,” Dave Oyler, the Club’s development consultant, explained.

Those early years began in 1958 when the Morning Optimist Club teamed up with a local juvenile court judge to find a solution to the widespread juvenile delinquency problem in the area. After touring a Boy’s Club in Sioux Falls, the group decided that a similar organization in Rapid City was the answer they were looking for. “It was so needed, a place boys could call their own,” Oyler said.

The team acquired a charter for the Club in 1958 and spent the next five years raising money to secure a location. An executive director was also needed to help establish the Club, and in 1961, Roger Erickson was hired for that position.

November 23, 1963, marked the grand opening of The Club for Boys. On that first day, a line of 125 boys could be seen waiting outside the doors of the Club’s first location, an old train depot on Eighth Street. An astounding 300 boys joined the Club that day, all excited to take part in the Club’s offerings, which included a social recreation program, a library, and a shop, all located in one room.

“The athletic program back then was a basketball hoop that was hung on the side of the depot with a light over the top of it,” Oyler said with a laugh. “Basketball games never ended on their own - they ended when someone hit and broke the light and it was too dark to play.”



Within two months, it was clear that the train depot was not big enough to accommodate the Club’s growing number of members, and, in the fall of 1965, the Club moved into a new location at the corner of Sixth and St. Louis Street.

In those early years, the Club would close at supertime and re-open one hour later. Many boys stayed at the Club during that hour, as there was no meal waiting at home. To address this issue, a Nutrition Program was created, which provided boys with milk and a sandwich for their evening meal. Operating hours were also extended until 9pm to accommodate boys that had no other activities to participate in after school.

Although the Flood of 1972 did not cause structural damage to the Club, the building was in the newly designated flood plain, making another move necessary. The Club did not have adequate funds at the time for the new building, so, to cut costs, volunteers were called upon to remove bricks, doors, and any other reusable materials from the old building for use in the new construction. In the interim, the Club moved into the Rice Cycle building on Omaha Street, where it remained for two years. The Club then opened at its current location at 320 North Fourth Street on June 9, 1976.

Growth did not stop once the Club settled into the new building. An expansion in 2000 added 12,000 square feet to the Club, resulting in a bigger cafeteria, an additional gym, an



Older Boys room, and the creation of The Hideout. In 2019, another 5,600 square feet were built, which gave each of the five age groups their own area in the Club.

Currently, The Club for Boys boasts 11 programs that include age-specific programming, a growing Education Program that partners with Rapid City Area Schools, an Outdoor Program, and a Nutrition Program that serves 70,000 nutritious meals and snacks each year. The Athletic Program includes two gyms, as well as tennis, baseball, basketball, and flag football leagues.

These days, a line of boys waiting to enter the Club can still be observed, much like that fateful first day back in November 1963. They can now look forward to enjoying a robust offering of activities while at the Club and members can still count on a caring, safe, fun environment which over 40,000 boys have benefited from throughout the past 60 years. According to Assistant Executive Director Mark Kline, “One thing that has remained the same is, although we’ve been in four different locations, the locations were always less important than the staff inside.”

Over 60 years have been possible because of great programs, a caring staff, and a caring community. Join us in celebrating 60 years of addressing needs, conquering goals, and changing lives. We are excited to see what the next 60 years have in store for our boys!

The Club for Boys Donors

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In honor of The Club for Boys’ 60th Birthday, an Alumni Association has been started to reconnect former members and provide them with a way to get involved with Club activities. To join, please email your name and address to alumni@theclubforboys.org.

4 wishes

- Tootsie Pops
- Pokémon Cards
- Pool Chalk and Ping Pong Balls
- Boxes of Individual Sized Chips

We are able to do more at The Club for Boys with the support of people like you! In addition to your financial support of our work, which keeps our dues at just \$12 per year per boy, we would appreciate donations for some items for The Club!



Thank You for Your Support!

You may also scan this QR Code to view other items on our Amazon Wish List!

