

“The Boys & Girls Club of Santa Cruz is one of the best kept secrets in Santa Cruz,” says Julie Penniman, Development Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Santa Cruz. The Boys & Girls Club of Santa Cruz is located in downtown Santa Cruz on the corner of Lincoln and Center Street. The Club has gone through many changes in the past few years. Some of which include extended hours, 7:30am to 6:00pm during school holidays and summer vacation. The Club is also open to six and seven year olds. The cost of a yearly membership remains \$15 per year. The cost is kept low so we can stay true to our mission, “to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.”

The Boys & Girls Club of Santa Cruz is part of the national Boys & Girls Club of America organization which has been in existence for over 100 years. Boys & Girls Club of America has made a difference in the lives of many well known actors, politicians, and athletes. Among those who give credit to Boys & Girls Club making a difference in their formative years are Michael Jordan, Brad Pitt, Bill Cosby, former President Bill Clinton, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Martin Sheen, Neil Diamond and Denzel Washington. The local club just celebrated its 40th anniversary. As part of the celebration, members and friends have decorated tiles at Petroglyph which bring new color to the outside of the Club.

Many of the Boys & Girls Club members attend schools, which are within walking distance, but others need to be dropped off by parents. At only \$15 for an annual membership, parents are beginning to see what a great resource Boys & Girls Club is in these economically challenging times.

“We are often thought of as just for disadvantaged kids, but we have kids from all social/economical backgrounds,” says Julie. It’s not just about inexpensive childcare. The club offers great programs!

Every day about 90 kids gather in the gym for an assembly to hear what special events are

# The Club “Best Kept Secret in Town”

By Linda Kay

offered that day as well as up-coming events. They are divided by age groups and then rotate between a homework room, computer lab, creative arts center, music room, the gym, game room and swimming pool. Each program area is staffed with a full time, youth development professional. For a nominal additional fee kids can also take lessons in swimming, karate,

“Greyson’s the coolest,” they claim.

The Boys & Girls Club of Santa Cruz is well staffed with four full-time administrative people, five full-time and eight part-time program staff, and 25 volunteers. All staff and volunteers have been cleared to work with children through background checks. All go through an orientation to be sure that they understand

their job and are a good match. Many of the volunteers are in UCSC’s Community Studies program. Area Director, Gretchen Long, has worked for Boys & Girls Clubs for 15 years and has been at the local club for the last year and a half. “What I like best is seeing the kids develop and take on leadership,” says Gretchen.

Safety is also maintained through the use of the kids’ membership cards. When members arrive their membership card is scanned. It is again scanned when they rotate into various rooms. It is scanned once more when the children leave.

On the last Friday night of the month, Boys

& Girls Club hosts a Family Night with events like “Are You Smarter Than a Club member” where parents compete against children or “Tie-Dye Night” when everyone gets to make their own tie dye shirts while listening to Reggae music.

The club offers tours daily and welcomes everyone to step foot in the Club and see what you’re missing. For more information check out their website at [www.boysandgirlsclub.info](http://www.boysandgirlsclub.info) or call 831.423.3138 ext. 22.



piano, guitar, drum, drama, or choir.

The Club has recognized the importance of creating separate space for the teen members. The once board room has been converted into a teen room for members 12 and up. The teens played an integral part in designing their own room, with couches, video games, a big screen TV and a disco ball. Teen-specific field trips are also offered by the club. For teenagers there is also a recording studio where they can create their own sound using music editing software and sound mixing three Fridays out of the month, Boys & Girls Club hosts Teen Night. A swim night, and 3-on-3 basketball, are examples of recent Teen Night activities. Joseph (14) who has been a Boys & Girls Club member for three years brags that he has only missed one Teen Night. Gabby (13) has been a member since she was 8. She appreciates hav-



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