



Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula volunteer Paul Millman with club member and Menlo-Atherton High School student Sigori Pirtle, 13.

Boys & Girls Clubs pays dividends to community, and volunteers

By Paul Millman

Volunteer, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula

Up until a couple of years ago, when I heard “Boys & Girls Club,” I thought of basketball and other sports. I’ve been volunteering for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula now for two years and I know there is a great deal more going on than hoops.

One of the biggest problems in the communities we serve (East Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Redwood City) is the high school drop-out rate. The Club serves more 1,000 kids per day with a range of programs — academic, science, technology, sports, leadership development, and art, among others.

But, increasingly, the Club is also focused on working with the kids to develop those skills they will need to be successful in school, to graduate, and to thrive in the future.

In neighborhoods right here in our community almost two-thirds of the young people do not graduate from high school. So, at the Club, we do what we can to work with schools, parents and the kids themselves to provide the guidance, encouragement, and support to keep the kids on track to graduate with a plan for the future.

All kids need a sense of belonging and connectedness. They need to know that we have high expectations of them. They need to have good relationships with their teachers. They need to have help and support if they are struggling.

I have seen with my own eyes what that means in the lives of these kids.

When I first met Sigori, she was a shy and reserved eighth-grader. I have watched her bloom into a self-confident and determined young woman — what a transformation. And Sigori is only one of many

■ HOLIDAY FUND

Donations to the Holiday Fund help the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula.

young people whose lives have taken new and better directions after their involvement with the Club.

I wanted to get involved as a community volunteer when I retired. But I had no idea where

to start — until I contacted the Club.

During my career I had delivered many speeches to groups of all sizes and had also trained our employees in presentation skills. I found a good fit for my skills at the Club: good communication and interview skills are an important asset for middle and high school students applying for admissions and scholarships to schools and colleges.

I have now volunteered doing this work for two years and couldn’t be happier with the results. Alonzo, in a typical transition, started as an introverted young man, lacking in communication skills and fearful of public speaking. By the end, he was able to prepare and deliver a five-minute speech and handle a mock interview with confidence. He, like many others, was gaining the confidence that will help him be successful.

My volunteer work is now a cornerstone of this “next stage” of my life. I am only a little part of the overall effort at the Club, but I know that I am working with an organization that changes kids’ lives. I encourage you to join me in supporting the Club and the kids. ■

Go to bgcp.org for more information. The administration office is at 401 Pierce Road in Menlo Park. Call 646-6140.

Paul Millman is a Palo Alto resident and a retired Intel Corp. sales manager. He has volunteered at the Boy & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula for two years.