My story isn't groundbreaking. My story is better than average and let me tell you, better than average isn't bad.

Growing up my parents worked hard at a small printing plant next to the Arlington Airport. Last year, I bought that print shop from my parents and have turned it into more than just printing to include graphic design, web site design and have pioneered a first-of-its-kind process of putting images into powder coating. Pretty cool stuff indeed.

About the same time last year, something funny happened to me. I had a baby. Ok, so it wasn’t me who had the baby, it was my beautiful wife. As I write this, our baby girl sits (suspiciously quiet) in her swinging chair and looks up at me and smiles every once in a while. I don’t need the smile to re-confirm that what I’m doing to help the Boys & Girls Club is the right thing, but it’s sure a good reminder.

How does a print/design shop, an airport location, and newborn relate to the Boys & Girls Club? Let me tell you! I was just a kid when my parents ran the print/design shop and they were busy trying to make a living. Where did I go to spend afternoons that was safe and had fun activities? The (new at the time) Arlington Boys & Girls Club. Where is the Arlington Boys & Girls Club currently located? It is near the Arlington Airport, after beginning on Olympic Avenue in 1974. In a few years, where will my daughter spend some of her afternoons? The same place I did, the Arlington Boys & Girls Club.

As a member of the Rotary Club of Arlington, I agreed to co-chair the Arlington Boys & Girls Club Expansion Committee, more specifically as the Arlington Rotary Club liaison. When the current building was being planned and opened in 1992, Arlington Rotary played an integral part in funding and to help find funding from other community members. With my personal involvement as a Boys & Girls Club member and Rotary’s history with the Club, I knew this was the perfect project for me and my time. If I was going to spend time away from my family, especially with my new smiling addition, this was where it was going to be.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Arlington Boys & Girls Club. To give you a perspective, in 1974 the city’s population was 2,000 residents. Today, the Club alone has almost 2,000 school age members. The current Club simply needs more space to take care of our kids during out of school time. More space not only for sports but for all the everyday activities that bring kids to the Club.

The basic plan for the Boys & Girls Club is to double the size. We need another gym, a computer lab, teen center, more parking, and a larger multi-purpose space.

Today, the Club serves both Arlington and Lakewood schools, offers shuttles to pick up and drop off kids both before and after school, all the while providing a positive, safe atmosphere for up to 400 kids per day. During basketball season this mushrooms to almost 600 kids per day and there’s no room for non-sport activity. In addition, the Club rents eight school gyms in both Arlington and Lakewood from 5am to 10pm so the Club's teams have places to practice. The computer lab is needed for homework help, and the teen center is needed for the separation of the younger and older kids which increases the overall attendance of both.
Parking is needed as well. If you’ve ever driven by on a Saturday during fall, winter or spring, you won’t find a parking spot literally within a half mile in either direction because of soccer, baseball, basketball and volleyball games and practices for our kids. It seems everyone in town is at the Club to watch their kids, grandkids, nephews, nieces or neighbors play.

This project is no-doubt a good cause, and what makes this a great cause is that we can actually measure the results. We will expand on those measurements in a future article.

In closing, I am involved because the Boys & Girls Club affects kids in a positive way. It did for me, it did for many of you who are Club alumni, it will for my daughter, and it will for your family. The affect lasts a lifetime and travels from generation to generation.

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