Boys & Girls Club: fundraising for a new home

Raven and Willow Vick, both 11, draw during an after school program at the Coupeville Boys & Girls Club. The high number of kids using the program that is housed in a former fire station is prompting club leaders to start raising money to pay for a larger building.

— Image Credit: Nathan Whalen Photo

by NATHAN WHALEN, Whidbey Examiner Staff
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In the past six years, the number of youth using programs at the Coupeville Boys & Girls Club has skyrocketed.

So much so that leaders of the nonprofit are raising money to pay for a new building. Thanks to a donation from the Stuurmans Family, the organization has the land to construct an 8,000-square-foot building at the end of Birch Street in Coupeville.

“The location is perfect for the club,” said volunteer Bob Clay. Clay, who is also a Coupeville Town Council member, said the proposed site is closer to the elementary school, close to the bus line and students don’t have to cross Main Street.

The Boys & Girls Club in Coupeville has come a long way since opening its doors in 2006. Around 50 kids participated during the first year of the program. Currently membership tops 300 and a typical day sees around 40 youth participating in the Boys and Girls Club programs.
“We don’t want to turn people away,” said Jamie Scharich, director of the Coupeville Boys and Girls Club about the current space constraints.

The club, which is affiliated with the Boys & Girls Club of Snohomish County, offers such programs as a daycare for students prior to the start of the school day. The club also offers art project, sportsmanship programs, tutoring and more. To accommodate the activities, leaders also hold activities at the Coupeville Public Library and in the schools.

The club opened in 2006 and operates out of what is basically a garage that comprised a fire station. When garage door is open, activities at the club often spill out onto the driveway.

In addition to the children, the building is also home to the Gifts from the Heart food bank. Wooden closets and refrigerators stretch along one end of the room. The Boys & Girls Club can’t conduct activities in the building during days food is dispersed to needy families.

When the new building is constructed, Gifts from the Heart will join the Boys & Girls Club in the new location. Clay said the food bank will have its own access to the new building.

The new building include a technology center, teen center, a commercial kitchen as well as plenty of outdoor space.

The Boys & Girls Club has to raise $1.5 million to pay for construction of the new building.

Club officials have a good start reaching their goal. Currently the club has raised around $250,000. That amount includes a $53,000 donation from the Coupeville Lions Club.

Clay said volunteers are looking for donors and passing the word that the club needs a new building.

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