Probably my earliest childhood memories come from the Mukilteo Boys & Girls Club. Like a lot of five year olds, I had a lot of extra energy. My mom pleaded with a neighbor who was coaching a team of 2nd graders, to let me go to his practices so I could burn off a little steam. To this day I remember running around as fast as I could, not really knowing what I was doing and not being strong enough to get the ball halfway up to the hoop. The Club has been an important part of my life ever since.

After that first year, my dad ended up coaching most of the teams I played on until I went on to high school. He did that for my brothers and sister as well. When my kids became old enough, it was second nature for me to get them signed up at the Mukilteo Boys & Girls Club. I went on to coach each one them for the next five or six years. Some of the very best memories of my adult life come from ... spending time with my kids and mentoring other kids in our community.

Playing basketball and football at the Boys & Girls Club was what I loved the most about growing up. Once after a hard fought loss on the basketball court, I learned a lesson in sportsmanship or lack thereof. Being a little upset following the game, I decided that I would forgo the traditional post game hand shake with the other team. I headed right outside to sulk. Our coach (my dad) was not going to have any of that. He told me to get back inside immediately and congratulate the other team. Instead I took off running. Through the parking lot and down over the hill I went. Today there are a couple of homes that would have blocked me, but back then it was just sticker bushes and shrubs. I made it all the way to the railroad tracks. I must have been a real sight hiking back up a half hour later. This was the mid 70’s so my hair was big, basketball shorts were really short and my tube socks were knee high. Scraped up and dirty from head to toe. I’m sure it was a really good teaching moment for my parents. I wish I could say that I realized my flaws and became a better sport, teammate and leader right then and there. It took a little longer. Eventually I did learn with the help and patience from caring coaches, volunteers and club leaders. The kind of people you still find everyday at the Mukilteo Boys & Girls Club.

We all know the virtues of athletics and a positive environment. In today’s world it can be frustrating as we see too many instances where sports can get ugly. Fortunately the Mukilteo Boys & Girls Club is one of those positive places. It was for me as a kid and has been for countless others over the last 50 years. It is still a place where kids can play sports the way kids should be able to.... for the pure joy of it.

I am proud to live in a community that continues to support the Mukilteo Boys & Girls Club.

Mike Rucker