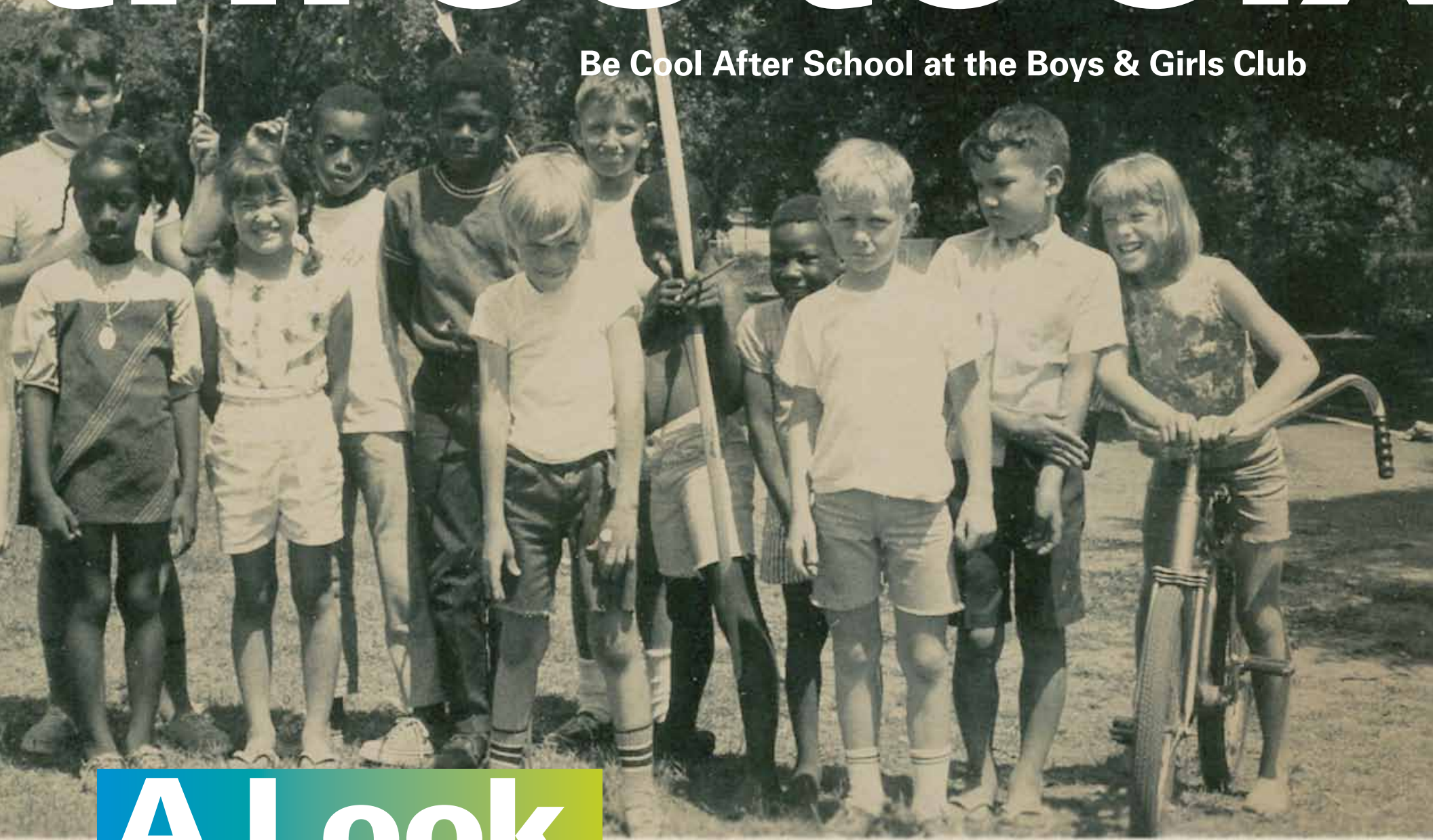


# three to six

Be Cool After School at the Boys & Girls Club



## A Look Back

Circa 1968

**Throughout our 70 years, we have seen thousands of kids pass through the halls of the Boys & Girls Club. Whether our facilities were in the Armory, a church or in our present day Ruppel Road location, we have enjoyed watching our local youth grow into strong, capable adults.**

To honor our 70th anniversary, we asked a few of our friends to share some of their favorite memories of the Boys and Girls Club. We hope you enjoy reading these as much as we did. These memories embody the spirit of the club, from its humble beginnings to the thriving community icon it is today.

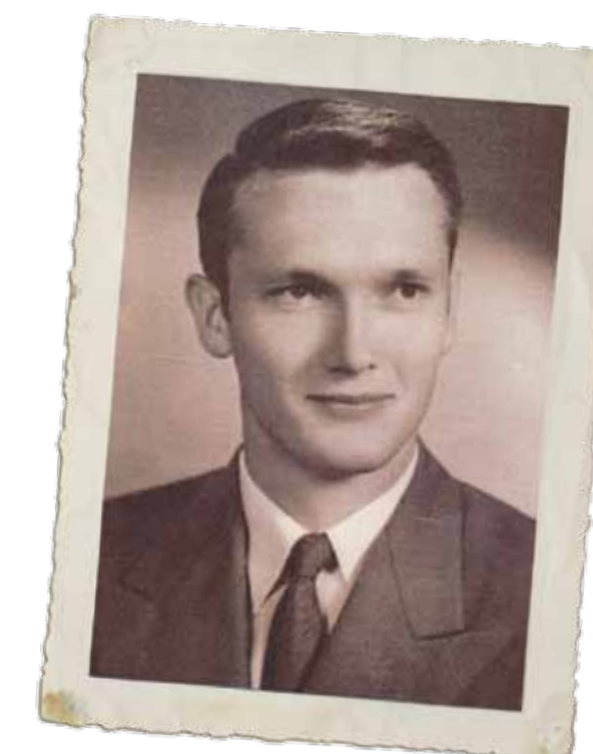
One of our earliest memories comes from Allan A. Gilbert, Jr., who years ago had written a history of the Boys and Girls Club. According to him, the late 30's were a troubled time of pre World War II anxiety and juvenile delinquency. Without adequate guidance or supervision, youth organizations or even the Little League, at-risk youth were bored and likely to get in trouble. With the help of brothers, Trigger and Jack Holt, a Boy's Club was formed at the National Guard Armory. W.W. Higgins, whom Gilbert described as a "fine gentleman and excellent bowler" ran the initial organization. As Gilbert recalls "there were generally four to ten or twelve playing half-court basketball at one end" and "a dozen or so boxing, sparring, punching bags or working on weights." As WWII commenced, the Club dwindled in membership but those left focused on the sport of boxing under the tutelage of Pete Hambsy of Clarksville. Hambsy trained a talented group of boxers including many Golden Gloves contestants. Along with the help of Frank Hancock, Hambsy offered, as Gilbert described "a source of

discipline, guidance and individual attention that was of a lot more value than they got credit for."

Gilbert, who some of you may recall later became a sports writer for the Fayetteville paper, eventually became a board member during the 1950's. During this time, the popularity of boxing had given way to baseball. Gilbert reflects that the board members spent a lot of time helping find lost balls at the baseball diamond. Serving as treasurer, Gilbert says "after two years of bookkeeping the Club turned that chore over to my good friend, David McNair, who should be a top candidate if this group ever has a hall of fame. He said he's never seen books in that shape...in fact, he said he's never seen ANYTHING in that shape. He also said I was a much better ball finder than adder or subtractor."

(continued) >>

# Dale Clark



“Be Great” is the national mantra of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. This slogan could also describe the apparent self-decree that shaped the work of Dale D. Clark. Through sheer aspiration and inspiration, he led the Fayetteville Youth Center/Boys and Girls Club for 34 years, helping it become an invaluable part of the community.

Born on December 6, 1934 in Boxley, Arkansas, Dale Clark married his high school classmate, Onetta Moore, before beginning classes at the University of Illinois where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1959. After graduation, Clark joined the Illinois National Guard. In 1960 he took a job as a Youth Fitness Director and Residential Camp Director at the YMCA in LaGrange, Illinois.

His work at the YMCA became the foundation of his dedication to helping kids. His calling to serve youth brought him to Fayetteville in 1970, where he began working as the Parks Department and Boys Club Director. In those early years, the Boys Club only had one gymnasium. Boys programs were held Monday, Wednesday and Friday while girls programs were held on Tuesday and Thursday.

During his time as director, great progress was made to make public school grounds available for community use. Clark, in conjunction with Superintendent Harry Vandergriff and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Ben Wilbourn, worked successfully to have public school grounds named an extension of the parks division. Thus, under his guidance, the Boys Club programs grew in attendance and popularity. Among the many improvements were a new gym, a renovated pool and the addition of baseball and softball courts.

Among his many achievements, Clark was also a governor’s appointee to the Parks and Trails Committee which recognized his dedication to the improvement of the Fayetteville Parks system. He also received the Arkansas’ Professional Award of the Year for Park Directors. In 1998, the Fayetteville mayor’s office declared it “Dale Clark Day,” honoring Clark’s retirement.

On Clark’s 73rd birthday, December 6, 2007, a city park was dedicated in his honor. This park today is located adjacent to the Donald W. Reynolds Boys and Girls Club of Fayetteville.

**Through sheer aspiration and inspiration, Dale Clark led the Fayetteville Youth Center/Boys and Girls Club for 34 years, helping it become an invaluable part of the community.**

After a lifetime of dedication to youth, Clark passed away in 2009. Throughout his 34 years with the Boys and Girls Club, Clark endeavored to do great things for the organization and the community. Whether it was the improvement of Club facilities or his dedication to helping the youth of Fayetteville, he remains an inspiration to everyone associated with the club. To honor his memory, we continue to do our best to “Be Great.”



Circa 1989

**In 1956,** he and the board worked with the Fayetteville School system to help support a summer citywide recreation program near California Drive. This relationship between the school system and the club was one that would continue to grow. Building the center at Harmon Field, according to Gilbert, was the first time a regular program had been established. “For the first time,” he says “there was a firm basis for putting the program up for public attention and support...the experiences of integration, building a swimming pool, adding programs for girls and widening the director’s sphere of responsibilities to encompass the entire community have been added feathers in the Club’s cap. Each new year for quite some time has seen additional accomplishments by the Club and Center.”

Another former member and current Board Member, Mike Hill, shared this memory with us:

“In the summer of 1965, my family moved next door to the “Boys Club” on California Drive. As an 11 year old, this was an unexpected benefit of the neighborhood. As you might expect, if the Club was open I was there, playing basketball, dodgeball, shooting pool or just hanging out. As I remember, the membership was a mix of kids from all walks of life and it was a wonderful place to make lifelong friends. In the seventh grade, I participated in my first organized football program that was coached by college-aged volunteers who, at the time, seemed like really “old” guys. The Club even had a traveling football team assembled at the end of the season that traveled and played out of town games in Siloam Springs, Fort Smith, and Springdale. In my high school years, the Club offered intermural basketball leagues that provided a great opportunity for teen interaction in a controlled and friendly environment. In hindsight, without the Boys Club in the community, I do not know how we would have filled the hours after-school and during the summer.”

Dale Clark, who led the Fayetteville Youth Center/Boys and Girls Club for 34 years, became director in

1970. His compassion and dedication to the youth of Fayetteville is evident in this memory from Board Member Eric Bradford.

“My earliest memories related to the club are related to many opportunities. Opportunities provided through the summer program held at Jefferson school: swimming, fishing, bowling, arts and crafts. Sometimes we couldn’t go bowling because my parent’s didn’t have the money to send us. I vaguely remember my parents not being able to afford for both my brother Ramon and I to have a membership and Mr. Clark let me participate anyway. Of course, I will always be indebted to the Club for providing me the opportunity to compete in sports; basketball, Kiwanis Kids Day football, and flag football.”

Another of our Board Members, Scott Sandlin, reminds us again how Mr. Clark was always willing to help. “When I was in the second grade a group of us took a bus to Little Rock to compete in a track meet. Since several of the participant’s parents could not get them to the Boys Club, Dale went and picked them up.”

Throughout our years, opportunity, friendship and a sense of community have led the Fayetteville Boys and Girls Club to its present position as a source of community pride and leadership. Our members have grown into family and have stayed connected with us though the years. Some have moved on to opportunities elsewhere while some remained here in Fayetteville to give back to the organization that

gave to them. Our current Director, Eric Schuldt, is one of those people. He shared this memory about growing up at the Club:

“Some of the fondest memories of my childhood centered around the friends, staff and activities that I participated in at the Club. Many of the friends that I still have today were people that I met while attending the Boys & Girls Club. The Club provided a real education in life. It taught me the importance of understanding and appreciating people from all walks of life. I learned the value of teamwork and the importance of treating people with respect.

I spent almost every day at the Club during both after school and in the summer. I spent so much time there as a child that my mother had to call me many times at the Club to remind me to come home for dinner. When I was hired as the Director of the Boys & Girls Club some 35 years later, my mother looked at me and said 442-9242. She still remembered the phone number to the Club.”

If these walls could talk, they would ring with the sounds of laughter, cheers and happiness. We will continue to guide the youth of Fayetteville into adulthood with the intelligence and fortitude to succeed. Fondly we read these memories and excitedly, we look forward to making many more.

**1938** Community leaders begin discussions about the need to form an organization to provide young people with a place to participate in constructive activities during the out of school hours.

**1941** With 50 young men attending on the first day, the Boys Club of Fayetteville begins operations in the National Guard Armory on June 28.

**1943** Mrs. WB Mahan becomes the first woman to serve on the Board of Directors.

**1945** The Club expands activities to include programs for girls & finds a temporary home in the Ozark Theater basement.

**1947** Harris Canning Company donates sports equipment, including a boxing ring and punching bags. 49 boys become members of the Boys Club Boxing Team and the team is named the Best Boy Boxing Team in the state.

**1951** Club membership reaches 120.

**1955** Recognizing the need for a more permanent location, the organization explores building a Club near Harmon Field.

**1960** A new home for the Boys Club is built on California Drive. This location would serve as the Boys Club’s home for 40+ years.

**1963** A wide variety of summer activities are offered, including: social dancing, bowling, baton twirling, charm courses, archery, creative needle work, and tennis. Kiwanis Boys Camp and Rotary Girls Camp are also offered.

**1970** Dale Clark becomes the executive director of the Youth Center. His service would continue for the next 34 years.

**1974** A program to feed hungry children begins at Jefferson Elementary.

**1978** The Sequoyah Kiwanis refurbish and donate a 60 passenger bus to the Youth Center.

## 1930s

## 1940s

**1941** The Women’s Civic Club announces their main objective for the year will be to establish a Boys Club.

**1941** Combined contributions of \$2,750 from several civic organizations, including the Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, Rotary Club, and Women’s Civic Club are received to cover operating costs for the Boys Club during its first year.

**1944** The organization officially becomes The Fayetteville Boys Club, Inc.

**1944** In an effort, to help shape the future of Club members, board members help participants gain work experience by assisting them in finding summer jobs.

**1947** The Club’s motto becomes “It’s better to build boys than to mend men.”

## 1950s

**1952** The Board of Directors forms a Mothers’ Club to support activities at the Boys Club.

## 1960s

**1960** The first paid memberships are established. Annual membership dues are \$2 for youth and \$5 for adults.

**1961** The organization officially becomes the Fayetteville Youth Center, Inc. with services continuing for both girls and boys.

**1968** Membership reaches 2,227.

**1969** First co-ed summer camp with 40 girls and 72 boys is held.

**1969** 800 individuals complete swimming lessons, 286 youth participate in the wrestling program and 52 youth complete a canoeing course offer by the Youth Center.

## 1970s

**1975** Beverly Melton is elected as the first female board president.



This work was supported by a grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation



Summer fun at the Youth Center of California Drive. (Circa 1999)



Generations of kids have learned their basketball fundamentals at the Youth Center/Boys & Girls Club. (Circa 1965)



Boys Club boxing was a popular sport in the 1940's. Billy Jack Mahan is pictured on right. (Circa 1945)

# Call for Photos

The Boys and Girls Club has made many years of memories in Fayetteville and we would love for you to share some of yours with us. Let's reminisce over any photographs you may have from our earliest years as well as new memories you might have captured. Please call Autumn Adams at 442.9242 x146 for more information.

➔ A special thank you to former board members **Rodney Ryan** and **Harry Vandergriff** for their contributions in helping us research our history.



**Pictured L to R:** Former Board Members Hal C. Douglas, Karl Greenhaw, Sam E. Gearhart and Former Director Jon Larry Starr.

**1999**  
 The organization re-affiliates with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

**2000**  
 The Dale Clark college scholarship fund is established in honor of the long-time director's retirement.

**2007**  
 The David Lashley Membership Scholarship Program is established in honor of his 25 years of service to the organization.

**2007**  
 Dale Clark Park, adjacent to the Boys & Girls Club is dedicated.

**2010**  
 "Great Futures Start Here" is promoted by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America as the new tagline for local Clubs.

## 1980s / 1990s

## 2000s

**1985**  
 The Latchkey Program, providing morning and afternoon childcare, begins. This program later evolves into the SKC "School Kids Connection" program and expands to all 9 elementary schools in the Fayetteville District. The program is still in operation today.

**2003**  
 Donald W. Reynolds Boys & Girls Club on Ruppel Road is dedicated.

**2008**  
 Membership reaches 5,447 youth and adults.

**2011**  
 The Club celebrates its 70th year of serving young people! We could not have done it without the 1000's of volunteers who have so generously given of their time and resources! To all of you who have helped us along the way...Thank You!