

Dear Friends,

Life can sometime throw you a curve ball when you least expect it. And sometimes life throws a good kid from a good home a terrible twist of fate. This is often the time when a child and their families desperately need us.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF THE MIDLANDS

OMAHA • CARTER LAKE • COUNCIL BLUFFS

Most of the kids who come to the Boys & Girls Clubs are good kids from good homes, with parents, grandparents and extended families who work to do the right thing for them. Over 1,100 children a day benefit from the work we do at the Clubs.



Right under our noses there are stories. How do we know these stories exist? How do we know that the work we do makes a real **POSITIVE IMPACT** in the lives of our members? It's all right there; you just have to know what to look for. It is the way they walk a little taller after learning something new. The way they smile a little bigger after a job well done and laugh a little louder while playing with friends.

It is also the way they cry when they need us...the Club...that becomes a safe haven, a refuge from a horrific home situation or a buffer from the stresses and dangers of the street.

Fernando, a good kid with a wonderful mother for example has a story worth telling...

Fernando and his brother and sister joined the Westside Boys & Girls Club two years ago. Their mother Ana was in the midst of a difficult divorce when she moved her family across town.

"I was very concerned about moving my children to a new location, new school and new home," Ana recalls.

While driving through their new neighborhood for the first time, Ana stumbled across the Boys & Girls Clubs' Westside Unit.

"**God just seemed to put the puzzle pieces together for us,**" Ana said. "I was on cloud nine when I found the Club. Both my sons and my daughter joined soon after we got settled into our home."

Fernando was the first to make the Westside Club his own. His warm eyes and quick-to-smile personality allowed him to make friends quickly, and he would soon find himself joining the soccer team and MIRACLES technology academy.

"Fernando really adjusted to the Club well," remembers Westside Unit Director Shelli Henry. "He quickly became involved with everything the Club had to offer and attended nearly every day."

I cannot thank the Club enough for what they did for my son. They brought the smile back to his face and the spark to his eye that had been lost.

~Ana

You can imagine then why the Westside staff became alarmed when neither Fernando nor his siblings returned to the Club for a week last December with no notice. Concerned, they placed a call to Ana to touch base. The news they received was devastating.

Through tears Ana explained how a tragic accident that had claimed the lives of multiple family members, including her daughter.

Shelli and the rest of the Club's staff offered to help in any way they could, knowing Ana's situation and the lack of a strong support system. Fernando and his brother would soon return to the Westside Club, which Ana hoped would provide them with an escape from the emotional stress of the recent tragedy that took their sister's life.

While Ana planned her daughter's funeral, the Club planned Fernando's birthday party.

"His birthday just sort of got lost in the fray of everything that happened," Ana exclaims. "I cannot thank the Club enough for what they did for my son. They brought the smile back to his face and the spark to his eye that had been lost."

Fernando credits the Boys & Girls Clubs for pulling him out of a very dark place and helping his family through the grieving process on their way to peace.

Many of us can relate to the hardships felt by Fernando and his family, but the sad truth of the matter is that stories like this happen more than we would like to imagine. I want you however, to find some hope in this next truth: the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands will be there for our community's children when they need us most.



I understand that during these economic times you may be more concerned with buying gallons of gas and milk than stretching your already thin budgets elsewhere. **Believe me, we feel the same strains you do** as we refuel our vans to bring kids to the Clubs each day. But for those kids, because many don't have a voice of their own, I must ask you to imagine the ways your monetary donation can bring smiles to their faces and hope to their futures.

Please give generously. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of over 8,000 children, especially those who need us most.

They are all right here, right under our nose.

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