

Boys & Girls club will benefit all of us

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Although Forest Grove is considered a sort of utopia by some we have many of the same problems as most other towns in Oregon.

Some are bigger; some not as bad that they could be. The city's low crime rate is a good example.

Our streets are not the safest in the state but we are in the right half of a long index list. But the obvious concern about crime here is the complacency we have about the potential that things could be worse.

Nothing could impede our quality of life in Forest Grove more than an increase in crime.

There are many antidotes to this problem but let's start with these: keeping all of our kids in school, engaged in productive activities in and out of school, healthy and sober.

In the United States crime and violence among youth is climbing upward, but we can slow down this national trend in our little town with an important partner you may not have heard about: The Forest Grove Boys & Girls Club.

True, the club does not exist yet. But it will with your help.

Very soon what started as a vision of a Forest Grove Boys



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GUEST COLUMN

and Girls Club will take a giant leap forward into reality. And by reality I mean moms and dads, grandparents, teachers, community leaders and your neighbors (who you didn't even think *liked* kids that much) will join together to build this facility. We will collectively take a bold step toward challenging our own complacency about the future --- and our kids.

I hope you'll join in.

Our own Boys & Girls Club will help our kids stay in school.

In a recent Boys & Girls Club alumni survey, 28 percent

of respondents reported they would have dropped out of high school if not for the club and 50 percent achieved a higher level of education because of their involvement with the club.

Our own Boys & Girls Club will help curb teenage drinking and difficulty with the law.

The survey revealed that 67 percent attributed their ability to avoid difficulty with the law to their involvement in the club and 67 percent said the club is where they learned how to say no to drugs and alcohol.

Our own Boys & Girls Club will get our kids moving and healthier.

Eighty percent of alumni said their club experience made a positive impact on their attitude toward physical fitness and 74 percent indicated they par-

ticipated in sports. This is good news in a time when nearly 32 percent of kids are considered obese or overweight.

The project will take money. And that can be tough during times like these.

But not building the Forest Grove Boys & Girls Club at a time when we know that these facilities make a big difference in communities, well, isn't really an option. And here is why:

This year more than 4,000 Washington County residents will be under some sort of post-prison supervision. These folks live among us. They are 79 percent white, 79 percent male, half are under 30-years-old and 64 percent committed a felony. You and I will pay over \$33 million over two years to deal with them. When do you think these

characters got on the wrong path? Where do you think the 4,000 statistic will be in 10 years as our population explodes?

And how many million are you willing to pay?

The Forest Grove Boys & Girls Club can be --- will be --- a building, a program, a way of life, a walking-the-talk, and a life-sized-tangible-commitment to our kids and a step in the right direction to keeping Forest Grove safe for everyone who comes here to live, learn, work and play.

Jonathan Kipp lives in Forest Grove, has two children and is a member of the Washington County Public Safety Coordinating Council. He also is an applicant for the Forest Grove City Council vacancy.