

Spring
2017



Kids in the CLE

A Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland newsletter



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF CLEVELAND

www.clevelandkids.org

Club Champions recognized

King Kennedy Club member, Indians CEO Dolan earn top honors

Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland has named Miryne Thomas, an outstanding student-athlete at Cleveland Central Catholic High School, as its 2017 Youth of the Year and Cleveland Indians Chairman/Chief Executive Officer Paul Dolan as the organization's inaugural Youth Champion of the Year.



Miryne Thomas

The honors were announced at BGCC's Breakfast of Champions, sponsored by First National Bank, on March 10. The top three candidates were awarded scholarships by Cleveland Indians Charities.

The breakfast celebrated the more than 80 members of our Circle of Champions, which is made up of donors who have made a significant philanthropic commitment to our Club members. Keynote speaker was Jim Clark, president and CEO of Boys



Paul Dolan

& Girls Clubs of America. Miryne is a senior at Central Catholic High School, where he has been a leader, a member of the basketball team and an honor student. He has been a member of our King Kennedy Club for 11 years and is the president of the Keystone Club, which promotes leadership. At the Club, he mentors younger members and helps the staff run games and tournaments.

Miryne volunteers at a homeless shelter on the West Side as well as serving food and making beds at Haven of Rest Ministries. He plans to study accounting at the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore.

[See CHAMPIONS, Pg. 4]

Bride sets example with Club wedding

Family values were reinforced and redefined at an unusual wedding ceremony Feb. 24.

Lexus Spence, 23, married Roy Edwards not in a church or park but at Cleveland's King Kennedy Boys & Girls Club, the neighborhood sanctuary she credits with keeping her life on track. The Club was so important to Lexus that she had Ron Soeder, president and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland, walk her down the aisle and Allen Smith, BGCC's director of operations and an ordained minister, officiate the wedding.

[See BRIDE, Pg. 2]



BGCC's Allen Smith asks the couple to recite their vows.

Club provides opportunities for budding singer

Music is Dayshana Plummer's lifeblood.

"It is a way for me to express my feelings," said Dayshana, 16, a Broadway Club member and student at East Technical High School. "When I'm singing, I believe everything is going to be OK."

For Dayshana, the May 2016 opening of the Notes for Notes Recording Studio at the Broadway Club was a godsend. There, she has blossomed into a talented and prolific singer/songwriter, according to Ryan Easter, a veteran music producer who runs the recording studio for Notes for Notes.

"(The studio) means a lot to me," she said. "A lot of kids don't get the chance to express themselves



Dayshana Plummer loves songwriting and singing.

through music. We do."

Dayshana said while "I have had a lot of people in my life doubt me and tell me, 'You're not going to make it,'" her mother, who is in poor health, has always urged her to remain positive. Today, Dayshana looks forward to writing and singing new songs – even if the audience isn't huge.

"I plan to continue to write music, even if doesn't go worldwide, even if it is only heard in my neighborhood," she said. "Everybody deserves to be heard."

Donors like you make it possible for kids like Dayshana to find their voice at Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland.

[BRIDE, Continued from pg. 1]

In the audience were more than 100 friends, family members and Club kids, 85-90 percent of whom come from single-parent households.

"I just want (the Club kids) to know and see that you can go far, you can go to college, you can be in love, you can do anything you ever wanted to in life," Lexus said.

The couple met at Tiffin University. Roy graduated from the school in December and is enlisting in the U.S. Army. Lexus, who belonged to the King Kennedy Club for 11 years, will graduate from Tiffin in the spring. They will live in North Carolina.

The wedding ceremony received coverage from the local media, including stories by television stations WKYC, WJW and WEWS as well as cleveland.com. Club kids and staff members decorated the gymnasium for the wedding. In addition, BGCC Academic Success Manager Jazmine Walker and Arts Director Matt Bott were among those providing music before, during and after the ceremony.



The King Kennedy Club gym, top, was transformed by staff and volunteers into a wedding and reception venue. Young kids were in the wedding, left, and in the audience.

Mark your calendars: Race for Kids is June 24

Looking for a fun way to support our kids?

Join us on Saturday, June 24, when Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland holds its annual Race for Kids at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. You don't have to be a runner to participate: In addition to a 5k run, there will be a 1-mile walk. And everyone – even those who don't run or walk – gets all-day admission to the zoo.

Your participation makes a difference. This is our largest event fundraiser, and the proceeds help us provide fun, safe after-school activities for more than 8,600 youth each year at 15 sites. Want to be a part of the fun?

- Consider becoming a race sponsor.
- Get a group together to run or walk.
- Sponsor an individual runner or walker by donating to their race page.
- Create your own race fundraising page and share with family and friends.
- Volunteer to be part of our street team, which will spread the news about the race.
- Share the event details on social media.
- Volunteer to help on race day.



Don't run? Walk with us at the zoo and help BGCC's kids.

Details about the race will be posted at www.clevkids.org and on our social media channels in the next few weeks. Look for announcements about special guests and the 2017 version of our popular race T-shirt, designed by Cleveland's Fresh Brewed Tees.

Last year, Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland decided that while gala fundraisers are fun, they are also costly. So we decided to pack all the fun into a single morning and put the savings into our Clubs, which help change lives. We hope you join us. Visit www.clevkids.org or contact mbartels@clevkids.org to learn more or sign up today.

Townsend to direct Pathway jobs program

Andre D. Townsend, a social worker with more than 10 years of experience helping youth in crisis, has been named program director of the new Pathway to Resilience jobs program at Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland.



Andre Townsend

Townsend comes to Pathway from Cleveland Job Corps, where he was the residential living supervisor. He is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran who holds a bachelor's degree in social work from Cleveland State University.

Pathway to Resilience was launched in December, when BGCC and Cleveland-based Resilience Capital Partners announced the formation of a groundbreaking skills and training program to provide at-risk teens and young adults with a pathway toward meaningful employment. The three-year pilot program will serve at-risk and

gang-involved young people aged 17½ and older, starting with the selection of two groups of 10 teens and young adults. They will participate in an intensive, six-month career readiness and mentoring program that combines job skills and literacy instruction with extracurricular activities such as athletics and music.

After completion of the training program, participants will be eligible for employment with program sponsors, which will include large and small Cleveland-area employers.

Townsend, a Cleveland native and 1984 graduate of Heights High School in Cleveland Heights, served in the military for four years before enrolling at CSU and joining the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He is currently finishing up his master's degree in clinical mental health counseling at CSU.



Devonte Simon



Jovanny Matos



Rikki Kyle



Kievra Harris



Samuel McKnight

[CHAMPIONS, Continued from pg. 1]

Dolan is the chairman and CEO of the American League Champion Cleveland Indians baseball team and serves as a member of the advisory board of BGCC. The Indians and their philanthropic arm, Cleveland Indians Charities, have invested more than \$10 million in Cleveland’s youth since CIC was formed in 1988. Mr. Dolan and the Indians have helped fund our Club operations, donated hundreds of game tickets for Boys & Girls Club members, provided baseball skills training for our kids and ongoing support of two key educational programs at the Clubs – the Ready Readers Plus program, which helps underperforming K-3rd grade students improve their literacy and math skills, and Brain Gain, which aims to prevent summer learning loss and moves youth towards better futures. Cleveland Indians Charities also funds scholarships for three of BGCC’s Youth of the Year finalists.

Mirynne was awarded a \$5,000 scholarship from Cleveland Indians Charities and received a proclamation from Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson. Finalist **Devonte Simon**, a senior at Heights High School and a youth leader at Cleveland’s Spiritual



Emcee of the event was WKYC’s Sara Shookman, a member of the BGCC Bridge Board.

Church Of God in Christ, received a \$3,000 scholarship from CIC. The winner of a \$2,000 CIC scholarship was **Jovanny Matos**, a senior at James Ford Rhodes High School who will enroll at Kent State University’s School of Fashion Design in the fall.

Other Youth of the Year finalists were:

- **Kievra Harris**, a senior at Cleveland School of the Arts and a Broadway Club member since the fifth grade. Kievra, a member of the band at her school, plans to study business management at Shaw University;
- **Rikki Kyle**, a senior at Beaumont School, where she carries a 3.6 grade point average and is a member of the National Honor Society. Rikki is a junior staff member at the East Cleveland Club and editor of Club News (BGCC’s member-written newspaper); and
- **Samuel McKnight**, a senior at Ginn Academy, where he was a member of the varsity football team and has been on the honor roll every year since the seventh grade. He plans to attend Morehouse College with a career path toward business management and entrepreneurship.

BGCC is honored for positive work environment

Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland won a 2017 Smart Culture Award for organizations demonstrating cutting-edge practices in sustaining a smart culture. Judges said BGCC “maintains a smart culture to bolster productivity, enhance job satisfaction and create a competitive advantage in the marketplace.” BGCC’s culture includes regular staff retreats, group outings, a weekly employee newsletter and interaction with kids. Awards will be presented by Smart Business on April 6.

Why I give



"I grew up in a family of 12 kids and I think when we come from a big family you learn very early that the world doesn't revolve around you. With nine younger siblings I was changing diapers when I was still in them myself. There is always someone who needs attention. A hand. A hug.

And it is miraculous to me that the more we give, of our time and dollars, the better we feel ourselves. Strange. It has taken me the better part of my life to come to the realization that happiness comes from a focus on others."

Mark Bachmann,
Medina

Why I volunteer



"I started to volunteer at the Notes for Notes studio in the Broadway Club towards the end of last summer because I wanted to give back while using my passion for music. I had heard about the opportunity through the Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland; I had previously worked for the Club for close to three and a half years, and I enjoyed helping the

students learn not only with school work but also with life outside of the Club.

"I notice now while working with the students that there is so much talent within the Club I had no idea about. Giving music as an outlet for them has really brought out gifts some of them never knew they had. It really is a rewarding experience to see the joy on their faces when they are able to actually create using music. There are schools that have cut their arts programs and those kids are not able to benefit from having a music program. That is why having both Notes for Notes, and the Club work together to provide such a space is a really great thing."

Dean Thornton,
Chagrin Falls

Viewpoint

It is never too late to make a difference

It is human nature to sometimes wonder whether what you do – regardless of what job you hold or what cause you champion – is meaningful. We all want to know our efforts make a difference.



Ron Soeder

It seems like every time I start to wonder, a child lifts my spirits.

One such child is a ninth-grade Club member who had been struggling mightily with life, school and literacy. I was not quite sure what to expect when she approached me recently. She then made a point of showing me her report card – four Cs and two Bs. This may not appear impressive, but this young lady was close to failing and dropping out! I am so proud of her. I am also proud of the loving, caring staff members who each day provide the kind of mentoring that helps elevate our kids.

This attitude starts with you, our donors, partners and volunteers. You believe in our mission. You believe in our kids. Those beliefs are powerful, and they provide inspiration to all of us here.

Thank you. Keep making a difference.

Soeder is the president and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland.

Events



Montage impresses in Rock Off

Montage, a rock group made up of three 16-year-olds from the Cleveland School of the Arts, captured second place in the Tri-C High School Rock Off at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The group rehearses at the Notes for Notes studio at our Broadway Club. A strong BGCC contingent was on hand to support Montage.



Catch Me If You Can is launched

We kicked off the new Alex Doody Catch Me If You Can Basketball program with a tournament and skills camp at the Broadway Club. As part of this program, some teens are learning athletic training through the Cleveland Clinic.



Kyrie Irving visits our kids, talks fitness

Cavs point guard Kyrie Irving stopped by our Broadway Club to kick off the six-week Kids Foot Locker Foundation Challenge. The program encourages all Club members to engage in physical activities for at least 60 minutes each day. "It's well worth it to take care of yourself," Irving said.



Conwell named top amateur athlete

Charles Conwell Jr., a longtime member of our Heights Youth Club, was named Amateur Athlete of the Year at the Greater Cleveland Sports Awards ceremony. Charles, a 2016 graduate of Heights High in Cleveland Heights, was a member of last summer's U.S. Olympic Boxing Team and competed in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics. He is an 11-time national champion, a two-time USA Boxing national champion and a national Golden Glove champ.

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Highlights



Liberty Ford donated a 15-passenger van to BGCC and is partnering with the organization to train teens for careers in automobile sales and service after high school. This is the fifth van donated to the Clubs by Liberty Ford. The vans are vital to the organization's programming because so many arts, sports, music and community activities require kids to be transported either between Clubs or to other sites.



Kids from our **East Cleveland Club** partnered with the nonprofit Sole Hope Team to help make a difference in the lives of people in the African nation of Uganda. Club members held a Sole Hope Shoe Cutting Party in which they traced and cut many sets of denim fabric patterns to be sent to the Sole Hope Organization so more shoes could be made. In Uganda, children walk, work and play all day long without shoes on their feet. As they continue to walk on rocks, through mud and hot desert sands, their feet become tattered and torn making them the primary host for simple infections. The pieces for the shoes will be shipped, and the shoes will be put together by a tailor and shoemaker.



We became part of history when the folks at **Slavic Village Reads** placed a plaque on the book box outside our Broadway Club. Slavic Village officially became the first Little Free Library Neighborhood in the nation.



BGCC Arts Director Matt Bott was recognized for his outstanding work when he was nominated for a Governor's Award for the Arts in Ohio. Matt took over a program that consisted mostly of an occasional drawing class and grew it into a cultural powerhouse, providing youth

with an array of offerings, including ballet, creative writing, band, guitar, African dance and drums, fashion design, graphic design, art, contemporary dance, drama and studio recording.



Our friends at **Ruth's Chris Steak House** graciously allowed us to be part of their grand opening ceremonies on Public Square and presented us with a check for \$10,000! Donations came from the restaurant and from those who participated in VIP events over the weekend. Among those cutting the first steak were Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson and our own Ron Soeder.



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Coming Up

- April 22** | Earth Day tree-planting, Broadway Club
- April 28** | Women's Board Fashion Show, Landerhaven
- May 11** | Survivors of Violence Kick-Off Event, Broadway Club
- June 24** | Race for Kids, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
- June 26** | Taco Bell Charity Golf Classic, Barrington Golf Club

About Us

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