

Evening News and Tribune

May 1, 2010

YMCA program helps people stay strong

Campaign has raised almost \$160,000

By *AMANDA ARNOLD*
newsroom@newsandtribune.com

>>SOUTHERN INDIANA — Last June, Chris Schonard had three back surgeries and, according to his doctor, water therapy was the best treatment. Then, Angie Schonard lost her job and physical therapy ran out on their insurance. Recognizing their situation, someone recommended they join the YMCA of Southern Indiana.

“We had no money, and no nothing. Now this guy wanted us to get a YMCA membership,” Angie said.

Despite this financial obstacle, the Schonard family was able to join the YMCA because of the Open Doors Program, which is made possible by the annual Strong Kids Campaign and financial donations throughout the year.

“We don’t turn anyone away for financial hardship or inability to pay and this campaign helps us raise the dollars to be able to do that,” said Dennis Enix, executive director of YMCA of Southern Indiana’s Clark County Branch.

While the title of the eight-week fundraiser is Strong Kids Campaign, it benefits everyone who participates with the Open Doors Program at the YMCA of both Floyd and Clark County. It includes the youth sports programs, before- and after-school child care, summer camp and membership for all ages.

“Everyone can be a kid at heart in some way here at the Y, just through the laughter and fun they can have here,” Enix said.

Since the kick-off in January, the 2010 Strong Kids Campaign has raised almost \$160,000.

“The goal for the staff was \$25,000 this year and this year we are at \$32,000 for the staff. Then. we challenged the board [\$15,000] and we are at \$16,500, and the community goal was \$60,000,” said Bob Kleehamer, board member vice chair and senior vice-president at River Valley Financial Bank.

The remaining funding is from a \$50,000 contribution from the Horseshoe Foundation of Southern Indiana, which was given during the victory celebration April 16.

“We can’t thank them enough for their support. They were on the ground level getting this place started and [see] the need, not only from capital but from the operations for the boys and girls and their families that need assistance,” said Kleehamer.

While the 2010 Strong Kids is indeed considered a success, a gap remains.

“We gave away almost \$500,000 in program fees and assistance, and then we raised \$160,000. We are getting better. Three-years ago, we gave away about \$200,000 worth of services, so with the need of the new branch [Floyd] and to better the community awareness of our program, we’ve seen that number and need in the economic times increase,” Enix said.

“Our board saw this as a challenge for the community to help bridge that gap even though the goal was \$100,000, to me it was \$500,000. So the real goal is to get where we are able to cover and fully fund these services,” said Jerry K. Finn, executive director, Horseshoe Foundation of Southern Indiana.

According to Sandy Sorrells, about a third of the children in the sports programs participate in Open Doors, and the same is true with membership, “but you wouldn’t know who it is.”

“They don’t wear a tag that says they’re on Open Doors. Everyone is treated the same way. The kids are treated the same way,” Finn said.

And the Schonards are more than thankful for the Open Doors.

“We got approved and Chris wouldn’t be where he’s at in his recovery without it. It’s that simple. We just couldn’t afford a Y, or any gym membership, without this program,” Angie said.

Enix continues to see the YMCA as place for all in the community.

“I don’t know of too many places that resemble the amount of diversity we have on a daily basis here at the YMCA. We have economic diversity, gender, racial, religious, all in one location. We have things to offer folks of all ages and it’s nice to be accessible,” Enix said.

While the Strong Kids Campaign is officially concluded for the year, donations for the Open Doors Program are welcome throughout the year and more information can be found at www.ymcasi.org.

ON THE WEB

- YMCA of Southern Indiana — www.ymcasi.org.