

Ribbon Cutting at Jasper Middle School Boys and Girls Clubs hold grand opening



By Dan Huth

According to statistical studies, teens are most likely to get into trouble between the end of the school day and 8 p.m. It's no secret that the lack of wholesome after-school activities in North Georgia has led many North Georgia teens to crime, drug use and pregnancy.

That's why Jasper Middle School Principal Steve McDaniel was enthusiastic when approached about the possibility of opening a unit of the Boys & Girls Clubs of North Georgia directly on the campus of his school.

Driven by McDaniel's support and the tireless work of Executive Director Michele Crawford, the club opened in record time. Although it takes most clubs nearly a year to enroll the necessary 100 members, "The Club at JMS" celebrated its Grand Opening on Monday, January 9th--less than two months after the groundwork was begun.

In a festive ribbon-cutting ceremony held at The Club, McDaniel told the assembled dignitaries and club members, "I'm very excited about having a Boys & Girls Club here on the campus of Jasper Middle School. This is going to be great for our students."

Club member Laura McCarver

acted as M.C. for the event, leading all in the Pledge of Allegiance and the Boys & Girls Club Code: "I believe in God and the right to worship according to my own faith and religion. I believe in America and the American way of life...in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. I believe in fair play, honesty and sportsmanship. I believe in my Boys & Girls Club which stands for all these things."

Don Russell, Chairman of the organization's Board of Directors, said he was encouraged by this opportunity to serve even more teens. "It's great that so many youth and parents have made their wishes known, that we need to open a second Club location this soon."

Executive Director Crawford thanked McDaniel, Russell and the board members for their hard work in getting The Club at JMS up and running. She noted that 2006 is the centennial year for the organization, and asked Russell to speculate on how many new clubs he planned to open in the next hundred years. After a chuckle, Russell responded that the reason the organization's name is plural is that he and the board fully intend to open more units in Pickens County, as well as helping people in Fannin and Gilmer counties organize Boys &

Girls Clubs in their counties.

Mr. Russell then introduced the Director of The Club at JMS, Ms. Liz Davis. "We are fortunate to have a person of Liz' qualifications as our Director," he said. "Her background, training and connections qualify her perfectly to make a difference in teens' lives."

Ms. Davis is a Family Advocate at Jasper Middle School, where she helps families identify the community resources available and take advantage of them. She works to further the student's education and improve attendance.

In an interview with ETC-TV camera crews, Ms. Davis said "I'm very excited to be a part of the Boys and Girls Club. I want to make a difference in our youth."

The motor that drives a successful Boys & Girl's club is its volunteers. Parents and concerned adults are urged to drop by for a visit and explore the volunteer opportunities available at The Club at JMS. Whether a volunteer spends an hour or so helping a kid with homework, playing a board game, or just lending an ear, a concerned adult can make a life-changing difference to a young person.

Contact Executive Director Michele Crawford for more information, at (706)253-5982 or via e-mail at MCrawford@BCGNC@net.com