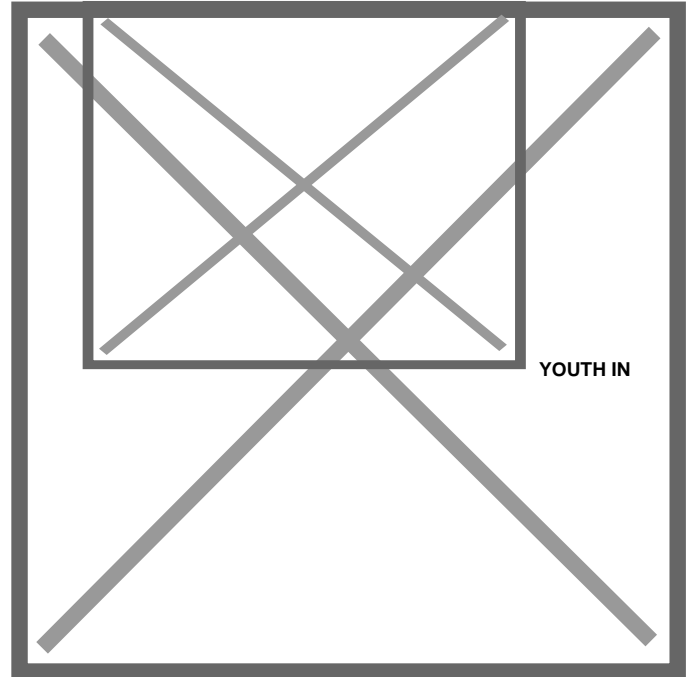


Boys and Girls Club 'joins' TSA



YUMA enjoy activities at the new Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club.

BY ERIC LO, MAJOR –

More than 260 members of the community of Yuma, Arizona, recently made their way to the dedication of “The Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club”—their loyalty was brightly shown, since several other annual events were scheduled for the same afternoon.

Newspapers, TV and two radio stations captured the magical moment of two organizations becoming one. It was the first partnership in the Western Territory involving The Salvation Army and Boys and Girls Club.

The music filled the building as Bandmaster Ralph Pearce led the 30-plus divisional band. Parents and children entered the gymnasium where the ceremony was soon to take place. Others toured the 12 agency booths, computer lab, game rooms and more. Scooter and Lula the clowns teasingly chased after children. The DJ danced his fingers across the control buttons, blasting “La Bamba” and other tunes. Ah, the sight and sound of excitement!

My fellow Rotarian elbowed me and asked, “Eric, it must be a big undertaking?”

“Well, yes and no,” I replied. “It has been teamwork ever since the former city manager Joyce Wilson proposed the idea. My gratitude goes to Gordon Bingham, Major Pete Costas, Jr. (South Carolina), Major Bill Mulch, Major William Raihl, The Boys and Girls Club board and many others involved in this journey. Their support has landed us successfully here.”

The ceremony began. Lt. Colonels Don and Jan Mowery and Lt. Colonels Raymond and Marilyn Moulton received their maroon, two logo-styled, Salvation Army and Boys and Girls Club T-shirts. Quoting Matthew 19:14—“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them...” Lt. Colonel Moulton challenged us with vision, value and vigor of the future.

Lt. Colonel Don Mowery officially cut the ribbon as the band played “Fill the world with music.”

“What’s the significance of today?” the KITI news director asked me. I told him in one breath, “The mathematics of this partnership is $1 + 1 = 4$. We will have a better Club, a better Army, a better community, and a better outreach for the children. Combining strength and trimming duplication is the way to go.” Eight-year old Jessica jumped in the interview and said, “I like to play shape up in the gym.” Another child added, “It’s a cool place. My friends like it too.” Louie Galaviz, our new executive director, spoke on behalf of the Boys and Girls Club: “Our 20 staff members serve over 250 children each day. We also network with local schools, HUD, the YMCA, and the Family and Child-ren’s Services Center.”

I could tell by the reporters’ expression the scope of our program surprised him.

But it didn’t surprise us how the celebration has transformed this day into a magical moment. For together, we have written a new page, with more to come. So, let’s keep writing through the eyes of the children... through the heart of God.