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Clubs now helping kids 6 days a week



Youngsters work on computers on a recent Saturday at a Davie Boys & Girls Club. (Submitted photo / January 4, 2013)

By Randy Abraham, Special Correspondent

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The Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County has added Saturday activities to their offerings, thanks to a \$241,000 grant from the Jim Moran Foundation.

The organization, which operates 11 clubs throughout Broward, began opening on Saturday at the beginning of the school year. The grant money is used to pay for personnel and operating costs and for instructors for a computer program to foster computer literacy in word processing, spreadsheets and PowerPoint.

Saturday attendees also receive a hot mid-day meal and a snack through the expansion of the organization's after-school nutritional program, said CEO Brian Quail.

"In a meeting [with] Jan Moran, the foundation's chairwoman and president, Brian mentioned the possibility of the Boys & Girls Clubs having the opportunity to expand its snack and hot meal service to Saturday if the clubs were open," said Melanie Burgess, executive director of the [Deerfield Beach](#)-based foundation. "Because Jan has long been an advocate for having the clubs open on Saturday, she told Brian that if [they] could deliver on the food service, the Jim Moran Foundation would consider funding the Saturday programming. Children need healthy meals and positive engagement more than just Monday through Friday."

"When I showed them the value of the computer program and the meal program, they graciously agreed to try it for a year and see how it works," Quail said.

The program, which is open from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. during the school year for ages 6-18, has attracted about 500 attendees each Saturday countywide, Quail said.

Alex, 13, a seventh-grader at Silver Lakes Middle School in North Lauderdale, said he and his brother Baylord, 14, ride their bikes to the club with their friends. (The youngsters' last names were withheld for this story.)

"I learned how to work on a computer, and I have fun playing basketball with my friends," Alex said.

Baylord said the arrangement works out well for their parents since they both work on Saturdays.

"It's a great place to go instead of hanging around at the house, and I learned how to run Word on the computer," he said.

The brothers also attend the weekday after-school program at the North Lauderdale location.

The new program is critical to advancing the club's mission to bring programs to communities in need, Quail said. It works to foster a commitment to academics, character development, citizenship and healthy lifestyles. Clubs are typically located in lower-income communities, and the annual membership fee is \$15.

The club's programs include education, recreation, health and physical lessons, leadership and citizenship development, cultural enrichment and counseling.

"We want to provide the necessary resources to strengthen families and give our next generation of leaders the education and experiences they need to reach their greatest potential," Burgess said.

For more information, call 954-537-1010 or visit Bgcbc.org.