



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

For Immediate Release

Orlando Sentinel Publishes My Word by Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida's Gary Cain

Orlando, Fla. (December 19, 2014) – Urging the community to remember at-risk youth across the region throughout the year, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida President & CEO Gary Cain submitted a My Word column to the Orlando Sentinel. The Sentinel published the story in the December 18 edition.

You can find it at the [Orlando Sentinel here](#) or read below:

The outpouring of care from our community during the holidays is inspirational. Charitable organizations – including ours – collect hundreds of thousands of clothes and toys to ensure children experience the joys of the holiday.

It is a very important endeavor; however, children need to be supported throughout the year as their needs continue long after the decorations are packed.

During the first half of 2014, nearly 12,000 youth were arrested in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties, primarily on stepping-stone crimes, such as drugs, larceny and assault. With an average annual cost to our community for each child arrested of \$73,130, we are spending nearly \$2 billion a year in federal, state and local tax dollars on youth crime in Central Florida alone.

One in four high school students will drop out. Four of every 10 girls will be pregnant by age 20. Almost 750,000 children drink alcohol in Florida – with nearly a quarter of those starting before they are 13.

I was once one of those children, smoking cigarettes and shoplifting, gateway activities to a difficult life. Thankfully, I became involved in Boys & Girls Clubs and met Errol Sewell. He gave my life structure, taught me life lessons and showed me that with hard work, there was a future. I've been involved with Boys & Girls Clubs ever since.

Giving a child structure and hope is critical to the future of our community. By giving children a safe place to go after school, with great role models, we see significant reductions in crime, teen pregnancy and substance abuse. These children are given hope and set on a path to success.

Maryah Sullivan, the national Boys & Girls Clubs Youth of the Year, is studying to be a medical researcher. There was a Christmas when Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida provided her family Christmas gifts. She still talks about that Christmas. But, if it weren't for her Boys & Girls Club being there for her each day, Maryah's life would be different. She would be a statistic. Instead, she became engaged, found structure and created a successful life.



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After the holiday season ends, I encourage you to think about mentoring a child, volunteering at after school activities, contributing to organizations like Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida or tutoring at a local school. For each toy given away, adopt the family and look for ways to help them all year long.

We must encourage, guide, teach and show our youth what is possible – and this is an ongoing endeavor.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida

Since 1944, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida has provided at-risk children from the local community, between the ages of 6 and 18, with a safe place to learn and grow. Our membership totals over 13,000 young people at 30 Clubs and middle school sites in Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. The mission of Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida is to inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens. Learn more at 407.841.6855, www.bgccf.org, facebook.com/bgccf or twitter.com/bgccf.

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