

Marilyn Owen had a front row seat to many of the big moments in the history of the Boys & Girls Club!



When Marilyn Owen joined the Board of Directors on October 11, 2000, she had no idea she would be personally involved in some of the most transformational moments in the history of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County. However, before she completed her Board service, Owen had a front row seat for the:

- opening of the first school-based Clubhouses in Lockwood and Billings,
- beginning and successful completion of the *Campaign for Youth*,
- celebration of Boys & Girls Clubs of America's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and
- selection of the next leader for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County.

While the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County had moved several times since first opening in 1971, the Club had only ever served members in one Clubhouse at a time. That changed shortly after Marilyn joined the Board, as the organization began to work on a new school-based Clubhouse in Lockwood, which would open in November 2002. In a recent conversation, Owen recalled the excitement, fear, and uncertainty of the conversations about the Lockwood Clubhouse. "We all wanted to serve more kids but there was so much uncertainty about how we could raise the money to keep it going," stated Owen. "I am really glad we moved forward because the Lockwood Clubhouse has done so much good for the kids in that community."



As the Boys & Girls Club worked to get the new Lockwood Clubhouse off the ground, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County Endowment Foundation kicked off the Campaign for Youth, which was a multi-year effort to raise six million dollars to help sustain both the Bair Family and Lockwood Clubhouses as well as open a third Clubhouse at Castle Rock Middle School. "I remember how ambitious the campaign goal seemed" stated Owen "but I was excited about the difference another Club would make for the kids in the Billings Heights".

In May 2006, Marilyn witnessed a historic moment for Boys & Girls Club as part of the Yellowstone County Team that travelled to Boston for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Boys & Girls Clubs of America. According to Owen, "the Boston Conference was just incredible, with amazing speakers and the stories of Club Members whose lives had been transformed by their time at the Club." Owen recalls hearing Denzel Washington talk about how Billy Thomas, his Club Mentor, helped save his life and thinking, "how significant the scope of the Boys & Girls Club Movement truly was." In addition to the speakers, Owen remembers watching our original Executive Director, Gordon Eldredge, receive the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's prestigious Master & Mentor recognition and the excitement of watching Endowment Foundation Board Member Mark Sorlie get his name drawn as the winner of a brand-new minibus!

After returning from the Boston Conference, Marilyn began a two-year term as the Board Chair and in this role, she led the process to hire a new President & CEO to replace Mike Marnin when he moved on to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America after nearly nine years in Billings. The leadership transition is a stressful journey for a non-profit Board of Directors, but Owen remembers that, “while Mike had done great things for the Club, she was optimistic they would find a new leader who would continue to make positive changes and take the Club to a whole new level.” In August of that year, the Board of Directors hired Brian Dennis to serve as the sixth President & CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County. Looking back after more than 14 years, Owen is “just thrilled with how far the Club has come and all the kids they serve!”

After an action packed nine years as a member of the Board of Directors, Marilyn Owen, and her husband Steve left Billings in 2009 to pursue a new job opportunity in the Fort Collins, CO area and today they are retired and split their time between Vashon Island near Seattle and the Tucson area. However, she remains connected to the Club as both a donor and believer in the impact Boys & Girls Clubs have on those who need us most.



Marilyn and her family