

Great Partnerships, Create Great Clubs – Lockwood Clubhouse

Eileen Johnson



Eileen Johnson spent 37 years as a Teacher and Principal in New York, Arkansas, Kuwait, and Montana, before becoming the Superintendent of Lockwood Public Schools where she spent the final 15 years of her incredible 52-year career in Education. Despite her **extensive** years of experience, she admits that she did not know much about Boys & Girls Clubs when Mike Marnin, the CEO for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County, invited her to attend the first Superintendent Summit hosted by Boys & Girls Clubs of America in 2002. When asked why she agreed to take the time away from her daily responsibilities Johnson stated, “I knew and trusted Mike from our days teaching together in Colstrip, so when he asked me to attend the Summit and learn how we could work together to help Lockwood students, I accepted his invitation.” Johnson’s willingness to learn how other schools had partnered with their local Boys & Girls Clubs launched the incredible journey, which is the Lockwood Clubhouse.



Recently, as she toured the newly renovated and expanded Lockwood Clubhouse, Johnson fondly remembered that fateful trip to South Carolina for the summit and the early years of the Club partnership. “I was always willing to attend a conference” said Johnson, “but as I listened to those Superintendents from across the country talk about their local Club partnerships, I was in awe and remember thinking, if they can do it, we can do it!” After the summit, the die was cast and with Johnson’s enthusiasm, the Boys & Girls Club’s desire to expand and five years of funding from a new federal grant, the Lockwood Clubhouse opened on November 22, 2002.

As a large, unincorporated community across the Yellowstone River from Billings, Lockwood has traditionally lacked convenient access to important services like medical care, childcare, and high-quality afterschool programming. Therefore, Johnson’s tenure as Lockwood Superintendent was marked with innovative partnerships like the Lockwood Clubhouse, which ensured Lockwood students and families could get support they needed close to home. According to Johnson, “the goal was to bring the resources families need together in one place, the place where the children and families already were. It quickly became apparent

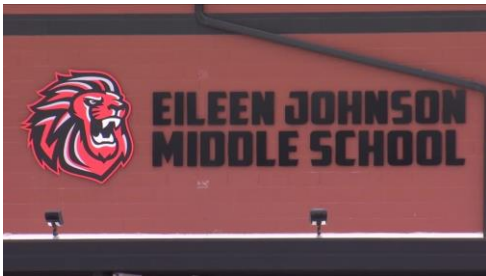
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50
YEARS
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that the Lockwood Clubhouse was going to fill an important need in Lockwood as it grew from 35 kids that first day to 150 kids per day within two weeks.



In addition to forging new partnerships to support current Lockwood students and families, Johnson also led several significant facility additions to accommodate the growing number of young people moving into Lockwood. However, while school facility expansions typically focus on school day benefits, Johnson saw the bigger picture and how

two major projects could also significantly improve student support after school and throughout the summer. “The families, kids and school needed the kids supported everyday” said Johnson, “and the addition of the 4th grade hallway in 2004 and later the new middle school allowed us to also add space for the Lockwood Clubhouse.” By the time Eileen Johnson retired in 2012, her leadership and commitment to the kids engaged the community to also support the growth of the Lockwood Clubhouse and created dedicated space for a: Club entrance, Club Bathrooms, Game Room, Art Lab, Education Center, Teen Room and an office and storage room for Club staff.

Over the last 50 years, there have been many individuals who have made an incredible impact on the growth of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County. However, Eileen Johnson’s commitment to the Club stands out, because not only did she help build a nearly 20 year partnership that is the Lockwood Clubhouse, but she also helped create a nationally recognized template that has been used by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County and other Clubs across the country who now successfully serve thousands of kids in school-based sites all over the country.