

Years of Dedication to Youth in Our Community

CELEBRATING
50
YEARS
SERVING OUR YOUTH


BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF YELLOWSTONE COUNTY



If you bought or sold a house in Billings, MT or the surrounding area in the last 42 years, you know the name Joan Wilson. Not only was Joan an amazing real estate agent, but also a fierce advocate for the underserved youth in our community. Joan was able to “marry” her career and advocate for her passions when she was asked to join the Board of Directors of the Boys & Girls Clubs Endowment Foundation in the early 80s. As Joan explains, “There were high power bankers, lawyers and financial planners on the board. The financials and investments were not my cup of tea. However, I was extremely passionate about the Boys & Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County and I knew many people in the community with my business and memberships at Yellowstone Country Club and Highlands Golf Club. My

knack was engaging people in the community with the Club.” Joan recalls having her brother-in-law, Bruce Wilson, into the Club for a tour. “Bruce noticed the kids playing pool on very “rough” pool tables. The next thing I knew, his boss gifted the Clubs (Bair, Lockwood and Castle Rock) \$60 thousand worth of new pool tables.”

Joan was one of the early presidents of the Endowment Foundation Board of Directors and served on the board for 32 years. During her time on the Board, Joan was instrumental in the success of the Campaign for Youth and growing the endowment funds. One memorable transaction Joan recalls is a client of hers who had no living family, loved kids and wanted to make a transformational gift that would improve the lives of the youth in the community. Joan connected him with the Club and after learning more about the Club and the impactful programs for the kids, *especially those who need us most*, he gifted his house through his estate. “He was such a generous man and was so happy to know he would be helping kids long after he was gone. He wanted kids to have opportunities they may not otherwise have if the Club was not there to support them.”

Joan was also instrumental in the development of a continuing education scholarship program through the Endowment Foundation. When family friends, Bob and Linda Nemer, lost their 21 year old daughter, Jenny, Joan recalls the outpouring of support from the community. “Jenny was the most upbeat individual. She was very well liked by her teachers, peers and their families.” With the many memorials the Nemers received, they wanted to honor their daughter’s legacy. “Jenny was a great student, loved sports, her friends and helping others. The Nemers wanted to honor the love Jenny had for school and her classmates by developing a scholarship in her name” Joan shared. “I was playing golf with Linda and shared that the Endowment Foundation wanted to create a scholarship for Club members to continue their



education after high school graduation. Two days later, Bob and Linda donated the memorials they received to the Endowment Foundation and the Jenny Nemer Sibinger Memorial Scholarship was created.

Joan saw many significant accomplishments during her time on the Board. As she reflects, “one of my favorite memories was when we opened the Lockwood Clubhouse. The fact that we could work with a school district to “seat” a Club in their school was a huge coup. The Boys & Girls Clubs of America looked at our model. We couldn’t believe the number of kids that signed up to attend the Club. We had over 300 kids sign up the first day.”

Joan was always one who would “jump in” and help when needed. “I always felt like I got more out of my time on the Board or visiting the Club and kids than I put into it. It was a joy knowing you were doing great things for the youth in the community. And, it is important to start when the kids are younger” said Joan. “It was fun to talk to the Club members. When they would get going and share with you, you would understand where they were coming from.”

As Joan continued to reflect on her involvement, she began to get tears in her eyes. “Sometimes it could be heartbreaking. One year, we delivered Thanksgiving meals to our members that could benefit from a little extra help. I delivered one meal to a family that lived in a small trailer home close to the Club. There were numerous kids there with no adults. My heart just ached at the conditions in which they lived.”

“I love what the Club does for kids and their families. I would encourage anyone that truly wants to make an impact in the lives of kids to support the Club. You really will be changing lives,” Joan shared.