

Chaffee County BoCC Earmarks \$500,000 Investment for Chaffee County Boys & Girls Club Capitol Campaign

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By Jan Wondra

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In a move that will be celebrated by hundreds of Chaffee County families, the Chaffee Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) has earmarked a \$500,000 one-time contribution to the Boys & Girls Club Capital Campaign, to go toward a new 22,000 sq ft. building to house the Buena Vista club functions.

“The community should know this money is coming from our Dept. of Human Services [DHS] – the staff there has for years maintained their finances in a proper way so that they have accrued this,” said Chaffee BoCC Chair Greg Felt. “This revenue represents money contributed by county taxpayers, building up in their fund balance. This is a special, one-time allocation here. When you look at DHS, it seems this opportunity is actually fundamental human services infrastructure ... it’s exciting to be able to do this.”



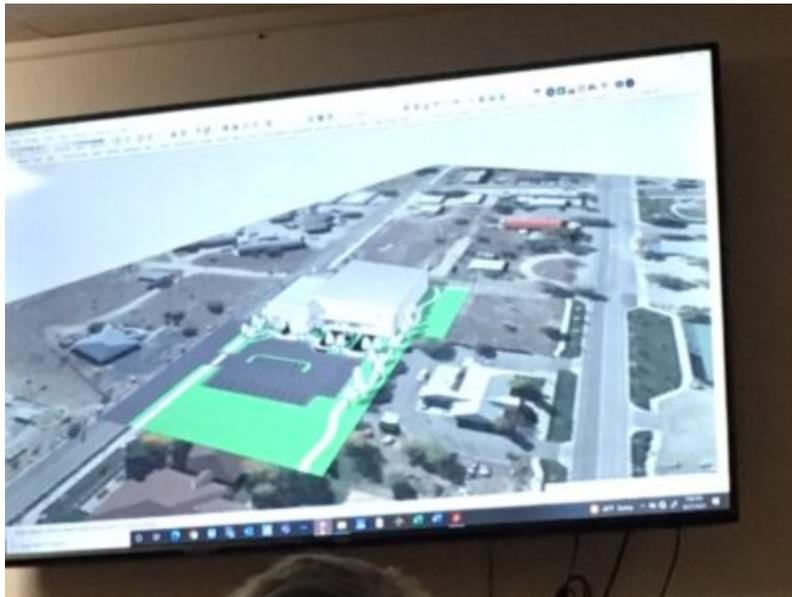
The Chaffee County Boys & Girls Clubs serves nearly 900 children across the county. Courtesy photo.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of this county now serve a growing number of children; estimated just in the past year as 880 children. The clubs in Salida and Buena Vista fill a child development role unmet by any other resource. The county depends upon it for programming and resources for the children of its working families, and for structure for four-day school weeks, during the busy summer tourist season, and school holiday coverage.

This past fall, the Chaffee Boys & Girls Club unveiled conceptual plans for a greatly-needed four million dollar structure. The club on the north end of the county has been operating for years using Buena Vista School District facilities at Avery Parsons Elementary. But the community and the school district continue to grow and this space is needed for school functions.

Recently and quietly, an anonymous donor has stepped forward to offer a \$1 million challenge donation for the campaign — if the community can match it.

“With this onetime gift you are providing the momentum for this – you all know the great needs of housing, healthcare and child development in this county, we can now show and leverage your investment and motivate others to contribute,” said Executive Director of the Chaffee County Boys & Girls Club Brian Beaulieu. “This \$500,000 commitment matches half of that anonymous challenge, hopefully inspiring other county entities to step up contributions toward the capital campaign too.”



The Chaffee County Boys & Girls Club presented a sketch plan this past fall, of a 22,000 sq. ft. facility serving the needs of the children on the northern half of the county. The proposed site is near the town’s public safety facilities and Community Center along East Main St.

“It’s a one-time situation that the county can help, and I just found out about the (\$1million) matching money,” said Commissioner Rusty Granzella. “I think \$500,000 is a great amount to send a message and get that matching money in the works.”

“They do a lot of things for this community, a lot of services the county and municipal governments provide in other counties,” said Commissioner Keith Baker endorsing the earmarked amount.

“Years ago, when we did a risk factor analysis, the Boys & Girls Club came out as one of the recommended programs,” said Chaffee Executive Director of General Administration Bob Christensen. “We needed a [recreational] platform for children where there were protective structures. Way back in the day we started supporting the club ... the old saying is ‘pay now or pay it later’, so there is a logical message here.”

The county hasn’t just earmarked this one-time half a million allocation, it also has a 2022 budget line item for the Boys & Girls Clubs totaling \$1 million, including this one-time investment in the county’s children.

“You have been supportive of rural families here and I promise to leverage this,” said Beaulieu. “We are getting this done — we are so excited and so honored that you would make this huge one-time investment. We don’t directly work in housing, but we alleviate the needs and requirements that families here need to survive and thrive. Thank you for believing in us — we will use this to get this done.”