

Spencer to take over as IV Boys and Girls Club director

By
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IVN Contributing Writer

Cyndi Spencer has been working for the Boys and Girls Club of the Rogue Valley since 2005. She first started out as a member of the board of directors helping with fund-raising for Rogue Valley Boys and Girls Clubs, which helped promote the Illinois Valley and Grants Pass clubs.

In 2010, Spencer was hired on as the resources development director and started out writing grants and expanded her role over the years. Spencer feels that by being able to write the grants, she has had the opportunity to learn a lot about what the Boys and Girls Club represents and what they are working towards: a better and brighter future for our youth.

As of July 1, Spencer's role is changing yet again. She will be replacing Scott Thornhill at the IV club as program director. Thornhill will be working at the Grants Pass Club, piloting a new teen program.

Over the years, the IV club has seen a trending decline in membership. Spencer would like to bring new activities to the club to spark new interests and bring the club's membership attendance up.

As program director, Spencer would not only like to see more student involvement but parent involvement as well. To achieve this goal she is planning on doing a parent/community survey. As the community grows, its needs also change. Spencer feels that a widespread survey would be the easiest and best way to see how the IV Boys and Girls Club can better serve the children, parents and community members of the Valley.

Some of the club's declining membership has been in teen attendance. For years, a 21st

Century grant provided the Valley with much needed funding for after school activities. Part of the grant covered membership fees for teens to attend Boys and Girls Club. With that grant no longer available, teen attendance is most likely to decline even further. With that in mind, Spencer would like to bring in a teen coordinator to develop a teen program at the IV club. She would also like to see activities that teens would want to participate in, from teen nights at the club to community events that the teens can become involved in.

The IV Boys and Girls Club also has a teen room designated just for teens to come and hang out in. Spencer plans on utilizing this room as much as possible to help bring in more teens.

"We need to have leadership from staff and the community to want to have teens involved in Boys and Girls Club in Cave Junction," Spencer said.

Along with the teen program, the Boys and Girls Club has many other programs available to kids of all ages from 5 to 18. One of those programs is the mentoring program. The Grants Pass club has established a strong mentoring program for at-risk students that Spencer would like to see emulated at the IV Club. With strong volunteers willing to work with kids on a regular basis and the right partnerships between those volunteers and students, the mentoring program could be a great success, not only for the program but for student's progress as well.

With all of the different programs offered through the Boys and Girls Club, not many parents and community members know much about the program itself other than it serves as an alternative to babysitters. As the new program director, Spencer plans on changing that image into something positive. She wants parents and others to know that students do not just come to the club and play, but that they are taught

life lessons that will ultimately help them succeed in the future. For example, club members recently created life sized Jenga game pieces. Not only did the kids have fun playing the game but they learned how to use tools, measure and cut wood to certain lengths needed to play the game.

"It gives the kids a chance to do things that otherwise they would not have the opportunity to do," Spencer said. "We can change from being cheap daycare to more of a youth development program."

Spencer said that will take more outreach. "We need to tell our story in a different way to community leaders, service organizations, and a variety of different people that are willing to listen about what we are trying to accomplish within the club," she said. "By creating that awareness throughout the community we can change the image of Boys and Girls Club."

Before Spencer can begin her fulltime duties as the new program director, she has a few tasks to complete. Currently she is working on finishing up a mentoring grant report that is through the Boys and Girls Club of America. She will also be training others who will be finishing up writing other grants that will need to be completed throughout the rest of the year.

Spencer is also chair of the Fore Kids Classic Golf Tournament that will be taking place August 21-22. She will also be doing some training to learn her new role as the program director.

Spencer looks forward most to working with the kids. She has three boys of her own that are now grown, but misses interacting with the fun and creativity of the children. Spencer has had ties to the Valley since 1970 and looks forward to reacquainting herself to the community.

For more information on what is happen-

ing at the IV Boys and Girls Club or other events hosted by Boys and Girls Club of the Rogue Valley, contact the IV Club at 541-244-8490 or the administrative office at 541-479-0620.



(Courtesy photo for The Illinois Valley News)

Cyndi Spencer

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