



Initiatives in Action: Youth Success Initiative



We can do more together.

Siblings Keep the Lights on After School...and in the Summer

Gabe and Roxy's parents are working hard to create a better future for their children, and thanks to a new after-school program, they have a powerful community partnership supporting them.

Mile High United Way, Adams County School District 14 and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver joined forces last year to create a Lights On After School partnership to provide elementary and middle school youth in Commerce City with enriching, educational and fun activities after school and in the summer. The new program at Kearney Middle School has created a life-changing opportunity for Gabe and Roxy and the 430 other youth who are participating.

"Our mom works at Taco Bell and dad works the night shift for Shamrock Foods," said Gabe. "They never had the chance to go past middle school."

Gabe and Roxy are good kids who do well in school and steer clear of dangerous activities they see some of their peers experimenting with. Still, without the new Lights On After School partnership, the two would most likely spend their after-school hours and summers without any direction or supervision.

"We'd probably be at home watching TV and eating chips," says Gabe.

Instead, they have the opportunity to participate in a wide array of activities, each designed to foster healthy youth development.

A typical day for Gabe and Roxy this summer began with the two reading to the younger members of the program in the library. Then, it's on to a sports activity like basketball, tennis or soccer, or even a game of pool until lunch time. Members of the program are given free school lunches and then move on to other enriching activities of their choice in five core areas: technology, arts, academics, sports and life skills.

Roxy is an incredibly avid reader. She's in the reading club at Kearney and finished so many books this summer that she won an iPod from the Club.

"She's a nerd," Gabe teases.

Roxy smiles confidently - she has a lot to be proud of.

Roxy is a member of the program's Torch Club, a team of boys and girls ages 10 to 13 that works on character and leadership development. Torch Club is a powerful vehicle through which Boys & Girls Club staff can help meet the



Gabe and Roxy attend a Lights On After School program at Kearney Middle School, supported by Mile High United Way's Youth Success initiative.

Siblings Keep the Lights on After School...and in the Summer - cont.



special needs of younger adolescents at a critical stage in their development. Torch Club members learn to elect officers and work together to plan and implement activities in four areas: community service, education, health and fitness and social recreation.

Roxy and the other Torch Club members participate in eye-opening activities, such as assisting youth in Managua, Nicaragua who are living in a community trash dump. Club members learned about the community, wrote letters to the youth, and organized a community clothing and toy drive to support the Nicaraguan families.

“What’s going on in Nicaragua is really sad,” says Roxy. “What if this were happening to you? I just want to help.”

Just like his sister, Gabe is already a role model, even if he doesn’t know it yet. He recently earned the MLB® S.T.A.R. Award, sponsored by Major League Baseball, for exhibiting STAR qualities: Sportsmanship, Team spirit, Achievement and Responsibility through sports, fitness, and recreation. Beyond the award, he’s a stellar baritone saxophone player, and thinks math is easy.

The Boys & Girls Club program is focused on inspiring and enabling kids, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential.

“For kids like Roxy and Gabe who are already on a path to success, we like to think we have some part in keeping them focused so they can maximize all their natural gifts,” says Jason Martinez, branch director of the Commerce City Boys & Girls Club.

“These two kids have really stepped up to become leaders,” he continues. “They truly stand out. They’re well mannered, follow directions, have great energy, are excited to be here, and are always willing to try new things.”

The pioneer program at Kearney Middle School is the first of many Lights On After School programs to be established throughout Commerce City.



In the city of Denver, 9,000 students are participating in the Lights On After School partnership supported by Mile High United Way, Denver Public Schools, Denver Public Schools Foundation and the City of Denver. Recent research in Denver found that youth who regularly participate in Lights On After School receive higher test scores and improve their school-day attendance.

In conjunction with the Jefferson Foundation and Jeffco Public Schools, Mile High United Way expanded Lights On After School to Jefferson County last year.

“Expanding Lights On After School is a key strategy of Mile High United Way’s Youth Success Initiative, which focuses on helping at-risk youth overcome obstacles and graduate from high school,” said Art Rimando, senior director of Mile High United Way’s Youth Success initiative. “We know that investing in quality after-school programs is a highly effective strategy for keeping kids engaged in school and helping them graduate.”



Art Rimando
Senior Director of
Youth Success

Mile High United Way’s goal is to expand Lights On After School throughout metro Denver. But, we need your help. Donate to Mile High United Way’s Youth Success initiative and help us expand Lights On After School.

For more information about our Youth Success Initiative, please visit our website at www.unitedwaydenver.org.

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Mile High United Way