



Great Futures Start Here

Boys & Girls Clubs are Key to Changing Kids Lives!

By Matt Watrous

Nobody – least of all Kainen Bell – would have expected he'd graduate high school with a 3.8 GPA *and* be named 2011 Boys & Girls Clubs Washington State Youth of the Year.

There were, after all, so many obstacles in his way. First there were the hearing and speech impediments, compounded by a stressful and violent home life and relocation to a transitional housing shelter. Later came a cross-country move to Washington and middle school temptations of gangs and drugs.

Nominees for Boys & Girls Clubs of Washington State Youth of the Year attended a ceremony at the Governor's Mansion in April, including winner Kainen Bell, to the left of Governor Gregoire.

But 12 years ago, his mom enrolled six-year-old Kainen in the Al Davies Boys & Girls Club in Tacoma. And that made all the difference.

Changing A Life

Kainen's Boys & Girls Clubhouse, one of 151 statewide, gave him a safe place to go and connect with caring adults. There he had access to personal growth coaching, tutoring, arts education, computer training, delinquency prevention, and an introduction to living a healthy lifestyle. It was here that Kainen joined the thousands of kids who every year develop life skills, self-esteem, and positive values. Because of the impact the Clubs have on kids like Kainen, 57% of alums

will tell you that the Clubs saved their lives.

Fast-forward to the Washington Governor's mansion in April, where Chris Gregoire named Kainen Washington State Youth of the Year. With him were 14 other finalists who, having demonstrated exceptional character and accomplishments, were graded on essays, speeches and multiple rounds of interviews. As the state Youth of the Year, Kainen received a \$2,500 scholarship from KeyBank and went on to represent Washington at the regional level. He will begin work on a business degree at the University of Washington this fall.

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The Boys & Girls Clubs' positioning line is "Great Futures Start Here." For Kainen, it's more than a slogan. "For me, it's a testament to how the Clubs can change a life."

Kainen's competitors came from across Washington and have similarly compelling stories. They are: Mutile Musee (Bellevue), Bianca Galvan (Benton/Franklin Counties), Marina Hill (Fairchild AFB), Briana Welsh (Ft. Lewis), Olivia Vellotti (King County), Marcus Davis (McChord AFB), Caroline Trindle (NAS Whidbey Island), Gerenell Ramos (Naval Base Kitsap), Shaun Carr (Olympic Peninsula), Jessica Benton (Skagit County), Sara Alkhedairy (Snohomish County), Haylea Close (SW Washington), Brandon Pavlick (Thurston County) and Travis White (Whatcom County).

In July, Kainen traveled to Southern California to compete for the Pacific Region Youth of the Year title. As of this writing, it's not known which five regional winners will advance to the national competition in September, where the President of the United States will recognize the national winner.

The Washington State Youth of the Year program has been sponsored

KeyBank, represented by Sam Bovard, Vice President, has sponsored the Washington State Youth of the Year program for the past two years.



Kainen Bell, Washington's Boys & Girls Clubs State Youth of the Year, receives his award from Governor Chris Gregoire.

by KeyBank for the past two years. On August 3, all 15 Washington State finalists have been invited to enjoy the Mariners home game vs. Oakland as special guests in the KeyBank suite.

Kainen's future is bright, and he's quick to share the credit. "I thank my community, my family and my Club for their support and I thank KeyBank for investing in youth."

Official MLB Charity

Boys & Girls Clubs of America have been the official charity of Major League Baseball since 1997. Boys & Girls Clubs are a national network of more than 3,700 neighborhood-based facilities annually serving 4.4 million young people primarily from disadvantaged circumstances, in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands plus domestic and international military bases. Known as the "Positive Place for Kids," the Clubs provide character development programs on a daily basis, conducted by full and part-time trained professional staff and volunteers.

Boys & Girls Club programs emphasize educational achievement, career exploration, drug and alcohol avoidance, health and fitness, gang and violence prevention, cultural enrichment, leadership development and community service.

For more information on how you can get involved please visit waabgc.org or find us on Facebook. Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) is the Official Charity of Major League Baseball.



Matt Watrous is the Executive Director of Boys & Girls Clubs Washington State Association