



PHOTO: CHRIS MOONEY

Center left – Click for Kids Award honorees Laurie and Larry Wetterschneider and Linda and Stuart Nelson surrounded by members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson

Dedicated Philanthropists

Click for Kids Award Honors Wetterschneiders & Nelsons

By Tiffany Kjos

Sometimes it's nearly impossible to quantify the effect one dedicated philanthropist has on a nonprofit.

It's even harder when you're looking at four family members who have given countless hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars to a charity.

Laurie and Larry Wetterschneider – and Laurie's parents, Linda and Stuart Nelson – have supported the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson for three decades.

"People think, 'Oh, Boys & Girls Clubs is a big gymnasium and that's it' – but it's so much more," Laurie Wetterschneider said.

"The clubhouse becomes a second home for many of these kids. They receive love and guidance through our staff and see wonderful role models in both the staff and older youth who are in the Help-A-Kid program.

"Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson teaches our kids that they can realize their

dreams as long as they stay in school and study hard. The role models that the staff provide are many former club members who now work at the BGCT."

This dedicated family is the recipient of this year's Click for Kids Award, named after local car dealer and philanthropist Jim Click.

"It's a great honor because anything in the name of Jim Click is a great honor. He has been such a phenomenal supporter of Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson as well as many, many other organizations," Wetterschneider said.

"From the moment I toured the clubhouse and met then-executive director Bill Dawson, I was sold on the amazing work that the staff does with our youth and the fabulous facilities that the kids have available to them," said Wetterschneider, who spent years on the organization's board and received emeritus board status in 2009.

Her husband, Larry, lends financial support and goes to fundraisers for the organization, and her parents have supported the clubs through donations "from the day I started with the Boys & Girls Clubs," Wetterschneider said.

All together the family has given more than \$400,000 to Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson, which has six clubhouses that offer children safe places after school and in the summer. There, the youth work on homework, participate in arts and life-skills programs, learn about handling finances, and play.

Wetterschneider spends about 20 hours a week at the Frank & Edith Morton Clubhouse on the Doolen Middle School campus, 3155 E. Grant Road. Much of her time is spent giving tours to prospective donors to whom she has reached out to.

Her parents underwrite arts programs and Thanksgiving dinners at the

same Grant Road clubhouse.

The clubs have more than 46 programs and 4,100 card-carrying members who pay \$20 per school year to utilize all of the programs and facilities at the club, and \$60 for the summer session. For those who can't afford dues, they can do some work around the club to earn their membership. No child is ever turned away. (The actual cost per child is more than \$750 per year.)

Lots of kids walk or bike through gang territory to their local clubhouse. Once there, they don't have to worry about their physical safety or hunger. And they don't have to worry about their citizenship status.

"We do not ask what people's immigration status is. Kids can come here and enjoy themselves and feel safe here," Wetterschneider said.

The clubhouses are open Monday through Friday from 3 to 8 p.m. so that kids can go there after school five days a week. The clubs have an arrangement with the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona to provide free dinners for them. During the summer, the kids get free lunch every weekday.

Through networking with her many Tucson friends, Wetterschneider has brought in more than \$1.1 million for the clubs. She also donates jewelry from her business, Laurie and Lisa Designs, for fundraisers.

"No one says 'no' to Laurie," said her dad Stuart.

Part of fundraising is getting prospective donors to understand how much it costs to run the operation. "We have beautiful brick-and-mortar buildings that we have no debt on, so it's hard to make people realize it costs money to run the programs," Wetterschneider said.

"The vast majority of the money is from individual and corporate support and special events. We receive limited government funding. That's why we have such a large board. We have about 58 board members because each one of us is responsible for raising a minimum of \$10,000 a year."

This year's operating budget target is \$3 million, and the clubhouses have impacted 9,000 kids.

Wetterschneider was one of the founders of The Event, a huge annual

fundraiser. Her parents funded a two-year arts program called Finding Your Voice, founded by world-famous opera singer Carla Canales of New York City. "She found talent in kids that you wouldn't particularly think had talent – singing, dancing, writing, art – writing lyrics about their life, their experiences," Laurie's mother Linda said.

"That inspired us to really work to beef up our art program to a higher level and that's resulted in some amazing programs we have now."

As an extension of that effort, Catalina Rotary Club gave a \$50,000 grant to build a new creative arts center at the BGCT administrative space on Grant Road.

The Click for Kids Award is more than well deserved, BGCT CEO Debbie Wagner said, and it's a big deal. "This is an expression of gratitude recognizing one person, couple or organization that's made a substantial impact on the kids at the clubs over a significant period of time," she said.

Wagner said of Wetterschneider, "When she's with the kids, she just melts."

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