



## Boys & Girls Club of Glasgow-Barren County: *Fulfilling a Dream*

The late Ruel Houchens, along with his wife, Nell, set aside a considerable amount of money to benefit children in their community. At that time, Ruel told Patrick Gaunce—then a Papa John's franchisee with his father, Wayne—to use the money to start a Boys & Girls Club in Glasgow, Kentucky.

It wasn't long before the Boys & Girls Club in Glasgow was up and running. The board had secured leased space at the Liberty District Ralph Bunche Center and hired the Club's founding director, Kelly Jenkins, to oversee the organization. While the leased space was a good place to begin, it was never intended to be the Club's permanent location.



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB**  
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## Boys & Girls Club of Glasgow-Barren County

The Club opened with almost 30 members. In less than one year, it had grown to 50 members and, soon after, there were almost 150 members, and the waiting list suggested an even greater need was yet unrealized.

Everything was going so well. However, the location continued to be a concern. Although Jenkins and her small staff made every effort to use every bit of space available, there were challenges. "We loved the space and our partnership with Liberty District," she said. "But we were bursting at the seams."

Five years later, with operating expenses of over \$200,000 each year, it became apparent the Houchens' established fund would not sustain the organization for much longer. This is when the board began to think seriously about the long-term fundraising needs of the fledgling Club.

They needed a new building with more space, but the idea of undertaking a \$2.5- to \$3-million building project—on top of current and future funds—seemed inconceivable. Yet, what the Club really needed for a new location, operating funds and financial security was \$5 million from a community with a population fewer than 15,000. On top of that, it was at a time not too long after the Great Recession when the country was still struggling financially.

Securing annual operating funds was a continuing problem. The Club was barely able to raise \$50,000 a year with its Pancake Fry, golf tournament, a couple other small events and a grant or two. Even if they were to continue operating on a shoestring, they knew they would run out of funding in less than a year.

"We had to make a hard choice," said Gaunce. "We could either run the Club for one more year or we could take the remainder of Nell and Ruel's generous gift and invest it for the Club's future. It's clear now we made the right decision, but it wasn't an easy choice to make."

Gaunce spoke with his friend, Commonwealth Broadcasting President and CEO Steve Newberry, who had a connection with Hartsook Chairman Bob Hartsook. "Steve mentioned Hartsook. We thought perhaps our project would be too small for the consulting firm, but we knew we needed help. We didn't

know how to raise the money we needed," said Gaunce. "We needed millions of dollars—not just a few here and there." They invited Hartsook to come to Glasgow to talk with the board.

"No one in our town had ever conducted a pre-campaign study for a nonprofit campaign. When we needed money, we just raised it," said Board Chair Bob Cary. "No organization

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Hartsook Senior Executive Vice President Karin Cox conducted the pre-campaign study, testing a \$5-million campaign to build a \$3-million facility, expand the Club and provide several years’ worth of operating funds, plus estate gifts for future needs.

Cox returned to the board with news that while a \$5-million goal was not impossible, donor confidence in Glasgow was low, and many did not fully understand the

Boys & Girls Club organization or its mission. Hartsook recommended a \$3.2-million campaign with a six-month pre-campaign period to develop communications, build a donor file, establish fundraising processes and recruit volunteer leadership. Due to their limited staff size, Cox also recommended they outsource their campaign and allow Hartsook to manage it.

Gaunce and Newberry were obvious leaders for the Boys & Girls Club *Fulfilling a Dream* campaign. With their commitment to co-chair the campaign, a campaign leadership team was formed with Nell Houchens and Betty Bailey as honorary co-chairs.



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The first four gifts of \$250,000 came from individuals close to Ruel and Nell, gave the campaign a solid start. Additional gifts continued to build confidence and momentum.

"We started having more success than we ever imagined," said Newberry. "Hartsook taught us to know where we were going, but also taught us how to focus on the kids and to show people how the Club changes their lives."

The original campaign goal of \$3.2 million was exceeded eight months early. With the board's encouragement, the campaign leadership team decided to increase its goal to \$5 million.

Soon, the Boys & Girls Club of Glasgow-Barren County and its 175 participating members moved into its new home at the new HERO Center, and the average daily attendance quickly grew to 280 members. The new, state-of-the-art facility has two gymnasiums, classrooms, commercial kitchen and security features throughout. Said Jenkins, "It's an amazing space, and the kids feel so proud. While new building is fantastic, it is so special that these kids know how the community has put their arms around them. We won't be able to measure the impact of the kind of love that has been shown to them through this campaign."

When you think about what could have happened in this small community if leaders had taken the easy route and thrown up their hands up in despair, it is unsettling. Instead, these leaders chose to lead.

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Many boards are good at managing what little money they have, and many organizations have become very good at operating on a shoestring. When they consider the needs of their community and share those needs in a strategic, well-planned way with the right people, they can make an incredible difference in the lives of those they serve.

Gaunce and Newberry still talk about the time they were trying to explain to their Hartsook consultant what could

and could not be done in Glasgow in the area of fundraising. Cox stopped them and said (in the nicest way possible and with a huge smile, of course), "With all due respect ... if I need to know how to run a pizza franchise, I will ask Patrick. If I need to know how to run a radio station, I will ask Steve. If you want to know how to raise money, ask me."

Thankfully, they listened. "At first, we wanted to tell Hartsook how to raise money in Glasgow," said Gaunce. "After we stopped talking about what couldn't be done, we learned a lot about why people give. But, our greatest lesson was just to get started raising money."