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## Boys and Girls Club annual bike ride raises \$350,000 for at risk youth



By: *Madeline Anderson - Email*

Updated: Sat 7:40 PM, Jul 20, 2013

## Boys and Girls Bike Ride 6pm 7-20-13

Published: Saturday, July 20, 2013 --- 5:00 p.m.

Gearing up for a 50, 25 or 8-mile bike ride, around 1,200 people came out to Edgewood College Saturday to support the Boys and Girls Club of Dane Co on its 11th annual bike ride.

"This is by far our largest fundraiser of the year," said the organization's CEO Michael Johnson.

"The Boys and Girls Club provides a valuable service to young people," Kaleem Caire said, the president of the Urban League of Greater Madison. "It opens doors for them, it opens their minds to things that they can do. They take field trips, they get involved with a lot of different people in the community."

Money raised from the charity event will go toward a newly-launched 6-year, \$15 million campaign to invest in the education and well-being of low income and minority children.

"We have 3,000 kids now, we're going to have 10,000 in the next five years," said Paul Tonnesen, who's on the Boys and Girls Club board of directors.

"We have one goal in our organization, and that is we want 90 percent of all of our Boys and Girls club kids to not only graduate from high school, we want them to receive a post-secondary education," Johnson said.

It's been a goal Madison public schools have struggled with for years. The district's

long-standing achievement gap is one of the worst in the state. Around 87 percent of white students graduated from high school in 2012. Just over half of their black classmates joined them. Yet according to the Boys and Girls Club, kids in it graduate from high school at a rate of 100 percent.

"So it's pretty easy--you get more people involved in the Boys and Girls Club, we have a better community," Tonnesen said.

First, Tonnesen says the entire community needs to acknowledge there is a problem, and get behind the plan to solve it.

"Most people don't understand, you know how much it costs for a family to send their kid to the Boys and Girls Club? It costs \$5 for the year," he said. "So where is the other money coming from? You have to come from the community."

With more donations and participants this weekend than any previous year, fundraising efforts for the Boys and Girls Club are growing. The event raised more than \$350,000.

"The beautiful thing about Madison is when you put a call out there, people will answer it," Caire said. "And so our children will be better off this year."

If you'd like to volunteer with or donate to the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County, go to its website: <http://www.bgcdc.org/>

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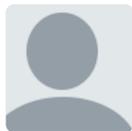
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