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COMMUNITY

HUNGER ACTION MONTH

GL Homes donates \$20K to Boys & Girls Club of Delray Beach for Hunger Action Month

By Alex Kushel
Sun Sentinel Correspondent

GL Homes recently supported the Boys and Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County as they volunteered to inspire action and raise awareness during Hunger Action Month.

GL Homes employees volunteered at the Boys & Girls Club of Delray Beach as they served a catered dinner and interacted with children and teens. They were assisted by Susan Taves and staff members from Feeding South Florida in Boynton Beach. The nutritious meal included beef lasagna, breaded chicken tenders, beef sliders, roasted broccoli, romaine lettuce salad and vegetables, fresh fruit, and homemade sugar and chocolate chip cookies.

GL Homes provided a \$20,000 donation to supply snacks and dinner for the month of September at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delray Beach and Boca Raton.

"I hope that all the GL Homes volunteers here today will inspire one other person to volunteer," said Sarah Alsofrom, GL Homes director of community relations. "We would love many corporate partners to join us for Hunger Action Month and be able to help these kids. It's a true motivator to come in and volunteer and raise awareness about Hunger Action Month. There is such a great need and parents are struggling to put food on the table. Typically, nonprofits are facing huge labor shortages. We have come in to help make sure these kids have a healthy, delicious and nutritious meal. We love to be able to come in, volunteer, step up and help them."

Throughout September, Feeding South Florida, the hunger-relief organiza-

tion serving Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, recognizes Hunger Action Month with free and affordable events in which everyone can participate to take action against hunger, including volunteer opportunities and the Outrun Hunger 5K. Visit feeding-southflorida.org/events.

Sil Rivera, GL Homes options manager, grew up as a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs in Massachusetts. She said she has enjoyed the opportunity to volunteer and interact with club members in Palm Beach County.

"It makes me feel just happy to make a difference and give kids hope that there are grownups that care," she said. "Growing up, I had mentors who would help me. I like giving back because I like what they did for me as a kid. It changed my life. I was a really lonely kid. Being part of a club like this helped me find my own community. If you are able to give back to the community, it's beautiful and it brings love to everybody and peace."

Rivera has also volunteered at Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County events to provide mentorship advice to club members.

"It's been wonderful to give them advice on the future and a lovely experience," she said. "Coming into this career, one of the things that really inspired me to keep growing within the company is that they do so many things in the community and they give back. That is special to me and is a part of my core values, so to be a part of a company with the same values is what I love."

Erin Nicoloso, vice president of marketing and business development at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County, said they

have 20 locations in the county for ages 6 to 18.

"We are always looking for community and corporate partners to give back," she said. "Financial support is amazing and it helps fund our program for all 13,000 kids that we support throughout the year. We have volunteer opportunities from special events that occur throughout the season to opportunities of tutoring, mentoring, homework help, serving food and helping with athletics. Because of nonprofit staffing shortages nationwide, we are looking to the community and corporate partners to come in and lend a hand to our hard-working and dedicated staff."

Nicoloso said club members may be on a free or reduced lunch plan at school and are also accustomed to processed meals or fast food.

"Almost 95% of our kids live at or below the poverty level," she said. "While our organization provides lunch, snack and dinner during the summer as well as snack and dinner after school, special meals provided by corporate sponsors like the one GL Homes supplied provides our youth with a fun and out-of-the-ordinary meal they aren't accustomed to."

Boys & Girls Club of Delray Beach Executive Club Director Jamari Grant said there is a need for volunteers in the kitchen to help prepare meals for club members. He said club members may not be fortunate enough to receive three meals per day on weekdays or any full meals on weekends. The club members receive a snack and dinner on weekdays and also can take leftovers home.

"Hunger is an issue that affects the entirety of the

country," he said. "We try to tackle the hunger problem as much as possible. I am thankful to GL Homes because our kids get to experience a great meal, and it's a gift for them. We appreciate all volunteers for their commitment and time and taking the opportunity to give back. The volunteers get to know the kids. The kids are able to learn from others from outside the community and meet and get to know different people."

The Boys & Girls Club of Delray Beach consists of nearly 150 members and they engage in several activities, including robotics, social and emotional learning, mental health and social recreational programs as well as financial literacy. The club members also participate in flag football, basketball, soccer, dance and cheerleading. They can create their own music and lyrics to express themselves in their recording studio, practice for performances in their dance studio and participate in their gardening program. They are also exposed to cultural arts, including the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach.

"The kids are here at a great place and they meet friends, build different skills and develop peer-to-peer relationships and bond with one another," he said. "The skills the kids learn at the Boys & Girls Club are transferable in life. When the kids do not have school, they want to spend the day here. We also have former club members who are volunteers or have joined our staff because they love it."

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County also features a career-bound program to help teach children life skills and prepare them for internships and



Don Nevitt, GL Homes director of home warranty, serves dinner at the Boys & Girls Club of Delray Beach. **TRACEY BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY/COURTESY PHOTOS**



Sil Rivera, GL Homes options manager, serves dinner at Boys & Girls Club of Delray Beach.

post graduation. They also have the Youth of the Year program in which club members have an opportunity to earn a four-year college scholarship.

Nicoloso said they have a volunteer coordinator and a great support system throughout the county for mentorship and tutoring. They also have opened new clubs this year in West Palm Beach, Jupiter and Pahokee.

"We have three new clubs this year where the attendance and registration are all up," she said. "Our summer program was a huge success. As we continue to grow across the county, the need for volunteers and community partners also grows."

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County also will have special events, including the fifth annual Securing Our Future Soiree at the Royal Palm Yacht & Country Club in Boca Raton on Oct. 26.

GL Homes, a longtime supporter of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County, continues to be involved with several community initiatives throughout the year with the organization. GL Homes provides new backpacks and school supplies to club members during a back-to-school drive. It also gives club members a new toy or craft during its annual holiday gift drive.

"GL Homes and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County collaboration is ongoing," Alsofrom said. "These are kids we would like to employ one day at GL Homes and give them that hope and the tools to do that for a future career. We want to allow these kids to see what is possible. These kids know that we care about them. I really think that is a critical piece of our relationship with the Boys & Girls Clubs and with these children."

Visit bgcpbc.org