

## Local Schools



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# Boys and Girls Club Relocating to Middle School Campus

SEPTEMBER 28TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Boys and Girls Club Relocating to Middle School Campus

**Poplar Bluff, Missouri** - The Poplar Bluff R-I School District has further opened its doors to the Boys and Girls Club immediately following the discovery of structural damage to the roof at the Hentz Center.

The Middle School, which is presently serving 120 club members grades 4-6 in the former band room, will add seventh grade and up in what was known as the JROTC building located between E.T. Peters Gym and Kay Porter Theater. The building will also serve as the office headquarters for the after-school program, which began moving in last week.

“Again, this highlights the incredible partnership that continues to pay dividends for our youth and our entire community,” said Chris Rushin, BGC executive director. “The (school) administration and the Board of Education share our mission.”

For over a decade, the BGC has operated out of the Hentz Center on South C Street, which the district leases in good faith to the organization for \$1 per month. The Hentz Center, originally donated by Bluff City Apostolic Worship Center, once served as the district’s alternative school.

“While the Hentz Center has admirably served the needs of this community for many years, circumstances dictate that we must find alternatives to meet the demands of our

youth,” BGC Board President Brock Littles wrote in an issued statement following the incident. “We would like to extend our deepest thanks to the entire Hentz family and Poplar Bluff School District as we look toward a solution to our immediate challenge and long-term plans for the future of the Boys and Girls Club of Poplar Bluff.”

The BGC will go from 5,400 to 7,700 square feet at its new location. The club will share access to the gym, as well as Bacon Park for recreational activities. Until the facility is up and running, there are about 50 students utilizing the former Teen Center across the street from Hentz in the church annex.

Attendance at the club was 413 as of Wednesday, Sept. 21, according to Rushin. Last year’s start of school attendance was 364 members. Rushin expects the headcount to increase to 450 once the fall sports season ends at Junior High.

“The bottom line is they’re our kids, as in our community’s kids,” said Rod Priest, R-I assistant superintendent of business. “Being more centrally located for the majority of our community will provide an opportunity for more of our kids to be engaged in after-school activities.”

Shown in the photos: Robbie Toth (left), BGC unit director, and Director of Development Abbey Heuser begin moving in to their new home on Thursday, Sept. 22.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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