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Boys and Girls Club of Dane County announces \$500,000 in summer programming

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Boys and Girls Club of Dane County CEO and president Michael Johnson talks about the more than \$570,000 in donations that will help the club run its programs this summer.

CHRIS AADLAND, STATE JOURNAL

The Boys & Girls Club of Dane County hopes more than half a million dollars will help keep area youth busy and safe this summer amid a spate of gun violence in Madison.

The group will use more than \$570,000 in donations from area businesses and individuals to expand its summer programming and encourage more area youth to participate. From swimming lessons to paid internships and a 3-on-3 basketball tournament with cash prizes, the group hopes to keep the county's young people occupied and out of trouble.

The announcement comes as Madison deals with a surge in gun violence and two recent homicides.

“Based on the number of shootings we’re seeing ... it’s impacting the kids so we felt it was important for us to do more and keep them engaged and safe this summer,” said Michael Johnson, Boys and Girls Club president and CEO. “Our members keep hearing about kids hiding in basements ... when you hear things like that, as community leaders, nonprofits leaders, business leaders, we have a responsibility to make sure that our kids and their families feel safe.”

This summer's activities will be the most the club has ever offered, Johnson said.

About 250 Dane County youths also will have jobs or internships through the program at more than 30 area businesses, making up to \$22 an hour.

A reality TV show also will be produced by area teenagers. The show will tackle issues that teenagers face, such as drug abuse, pregnancy and bullying, Johnson said.

“With this reality show, we’ll be showing the struggles that kids face out in their community and how they challenge that struggle,” said Madison filmmaker Rafael Ragland, who will help produce the show.

The funding includes \$50,000 from the city to help pay for a coalition of community groups, including the Boys & Girls Club, to offer support services for victims of violence and peer-support programs. The money was approved by the City Council on Tuesday.

About 30 businesses, nonprofits and local governments donated money or will partner with the club to help the club run its programs and events. Individuals also donated money to support the effort, Johnson said.

Other ways the Boys & Girls Club will use the money include a back-to-school event, reading challenges, sending children to summer camps and swimming lessons.

“This is another way of reaching out to people in the community,” said Anthony Cooper, executive director of the Focused Interruption Coalition. “We want to make sure we have all hands on deck ... We want to be able to change things in the next five years.”

A credit union at the club will offer returns of 5 percent, up to \$500, to young people who deposit their money there.

To participate in the program, Johnson said youngsters and teenagers need to register in advance. In many cases, participation costs can be subsidized by the state or paid for through scholarships.

For information about volunteering, visit bgcdc.org/get-involved/volunteer.



Map data ©2017 Google

To become a member or volunteer

A Boys and Girls Club of Dane County membership costs \$10 a year. To fill out an application and learn about other offerings, go to bgcdc.org/what-we-do/become-a-club-member/.

For more information about volunteering or donating, go to bgcdc.org/get-involved/.