

June 17, 2010

## Bill Stokes to get Local Hero award dental care awareness campaign



Bill Stokes Jr., center, works alongside volunteers, from left, Steve Kirkland of Blue Ridge Community Health Services; Crystal Sparks and Jessica Juergens of Carolina First Bank; and Boys and Girls Club of Henderson County volunteers Quanterra Foster and Dakota Morrow during the Etowah Valley Charity Pro-Am golf tournament. (John Fletcher/jfletcher@citizen-times.com)

*By Sandra V. Rodriguez*

There were no affordable dental care clinics that served children, much less adults, in Henderson County during the 1990s.

Through a capital campaign, Bill Stokes Jr. and a handful of others set out to change that by expanding from two exam rooms serving children in 1995 to 10 rooms that provide adults and children services that include periodontal care, cleanings, extractions and emergency dental services.

Stokes will be honored with the Local Hero award for his work to get the clinic built at a gala fundraiser on Saturday at the Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County, 1304 Ashe St., Hendersonville. The theme of the event is transformation and will celebrate stories of renewal from members of the club.

The nonprofit typically gives the award to an individual who, according to Executive Director Kevin Lauritsen, "gets in the trenches and just make things happen in the community ... and they're often happening behind the scenes because of individuals like Bill."

"Nobody had spearheaded an effort to make that happen," Stokes said about the William F. Stokes Jr. Dental Center. "And I feel like I did do that. My name is not on that building because of any huge financial contribution, but because of effort."

Stokes' hope at the time was to add much-needed dental services to Blue Ridge Community Health Services, which provides affordable health care to uninsured and underinsured residents of Henderson County. Too many children were suffering from baby bottle tooth decay, he said. In some cases, the situation was severe enough that children required surgery.

Stokes was part of a fairly small group of community members at that time who just made things happen when nobody else would, Lauritsen said.

That commitment extends to the Boys & Girls Club, where he has organized the Etowah Valley Charity Pro-Am for 14 years, which has raised \$300,000 to benefit the club and the health center.

His hard work also helped increase awareness of the importance of access to dental care, said Milton Butterworth, director of community relations at the health center.

“So he was really at the forefront in this community in terms of recognizing how important access to dental care is and that the community needed to do something about it.”

## Additional Facts

Boys & Girls Club by the numbers  
**950** members registered.

- **\$5** annual membership fee per child.
- **1,270** total youths served.
- **3,864** volunteer hours logged.
- **266** club members completed
- **2,159** volunteer hours.
- **\$2,000** raised by members for charitable causes.
- **48** percent of members improved/maintained A or B average in school.
- **43** percent of kids enrolled for 2 or more years.
- **92** percent of kids eligible for free/reduced-price lunch.
- **49** percent of kids come from single-adult household.
- **47,359** snacks served.

Source: Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County's 2009 annual report

- The Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County is taking donations during its ResponseAbility campaign. The goal is to raise \$120,000, which will be used to keep the club operating. For information or to donate, call Julia Hockenberry at 693-9444.

- Fundraiser tickets are available and cost \$125 per person. Proceeds will benefit the Boys & Girls Club. Call 693-9444, ext. 124.