



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF PORTLAND METROPOLITAN AREA

## **BGCP TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 500: ROCKWOOD CATALYST CAMPAIGN**

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

### **BRYAN GASTELUM-PLATA, BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF PORTLAND MEMBER AND YOUTH OF THE YEAR: Personal testimony to impact of BGCP**

My name is Bryan Gastelum-Piata and I've been a member of the Wattles Boys & Girls Club for 12 years. The Wattles Boys & Girls Club has made me who I am today. When I entered high school, I didn't think I would go to college. Now, I'm a senior and I have been accepted into two 4-year schools.

Growing up at the Wattles Boys & Girls Club has had a big influence on my life. If I hadn't joined the Club, I don't think I would be involved in sports. Being able to join sport leagues at the Club like soccer, basketball and flag football, made me realize how much I love sports. Sports play a large role in my life today. The Club has taught me how to reach out and help people in my life and in my community. It has also helped me develop a good work ethic in school and sports. Being one of the oldest teens at Wattles has helped me be a leader and has shown me how to be a good role model to younger kids. The Club has given me multiple opportunities to develop my leadership skills.

I have coached basketball, soccer, flag football and kickball. I've learned being a coach is about being a role model. Being a leader means I have to act right, listen, and be responsible. I have learned to combine leadership with sports and I am a successful scholar athlete at Cleveland High School. The Club has always encouraged sportsmanship and hard work, and those are values I believe in. I am a 5-time varsity letterman, and I am the captain of the wrestling team as well as having played soccer and lacrosse.

These experiences have helped me lead my high school wrestling team as both a captain and a coach, and finally helped me become a member of the Gresham Fire and Rescue Cadet Program which has been a great experience. I could not have done this without the support and love I found at The Wattles Boys & Girls Club.

The Club has done so much for my family and me when we have struggled financially. They have given us boxes full of food every year, helped us celebrate Christmas by giving us presents to put under our tree, and of course, given us a place to call home. I'm passionate about the Boys & Girls Club, and I want to give back for everything they've done for me. Giving back is one of the best feelings I've experienced. Seeing people smile makes me feel good inside and drives me to do more. I've never done community service because I have to. I do community service because I want to and I have fun doing it. The Club has given me opportunities to volunteer by joining Torch Club when I was younger, and now being an active member in Keystone Club. All these experiences have helped me decide what I want to do in the future, and that's to become a firefighter. Firefighting would allow me

to stay involved in my community--from helping someone in a life threatening situation, to just being a hero and making people feel safe.

Growing up without a father created a lot of challenges for me. I have had to teach myself how to be a man. I faced challenges throughout every aspect of my life. I remember watching my friends get picked up by their parents after school, while my brother and I were left to take the city bus. My mom was always working, so I had to learn to take the bus at the age of 6, and I would always get home before my mom. Because of this, I would have to make dinner for myself. My family and I have always struggled with money. Having to move to different places every year because my mom couldn't pay rent made it hard for me to get comfortable in my community. When I was 6 I went to divorce therapy with my siblings. It was there that I was introduced to the Wattles Boys & Girls Club. My mom signed me up and that's when it all changed for me. The Club gave me somewhere I could go after school. They gave me a roof over my head, food to eat, and a place to play. There is one community that will always be in my heart and that's the Lents Community. No matter how much I move around Portland, the Wattles Boys & Girls Club will always be a place I call "Home."

The Boys & Girls Club has introduced me to my role model, who I consider to be my second mom. That person is Ashley Campbell. She has been there for me since I was 6 years old. She is the person I go to for advice and the person I go to when I'm feeling down. She has inspired me in many ways and has always been there for my family and me. From mentors to sports, community service and anything in between, the Boys & Girls Clubs have helped me grow and really find myself. I would like to thank Wattles and the Boys & Girls Clubs for everything they have done for me.

Thank You,

Bryan Gastelum-Plata