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West Salem Boys & Girls Club gets interim director

By MATTHEW PERENCHIO | Assistant editor

The West Salem Boys & Girls Club is coming together more and more, and now, with an interim site director, the facility is nearly ready.

Sarah Wendland has been named as the interim site director for the club and will head its organization. Wendland, who was previously the site director for the Huber and Schuh/Mullen clubs in La Crosse, started June 18 and said she is looking forward to putting the finishing touches on the facility and opening the doors.

"I think it's very important to have a place for the kids to go and relax and they can just be themselves," said Wendland, 25. "It's a chance to explore and be yourself."

And Wendland should know. She has practically grown up with the Boys & Girls Club.

The 2000 Aquinas High School grad spent much of her grade school and middle school years at the Clinton Street club in La Crosse, being particularly fond of the cooking and arts activities offered as well as basketball.

While in college, Wendland started working at the Boys & Girls Club and eventually became a volunteer and activities director. In January 2006, she was promoted to site director and has now come to West Salem.



Sarah Wendland will take over leadership as the interim director of the West Salem Boys & Girls Club.
Photo by Matthew Perenchio

"I love a new challenge, and this would be a positive challenge in my life," said Wendland, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology from Viterbo University in 2005.

Wendland was one of six people who applied for the position. Errol Kindschy, who chaired the three-person interviewing committee under the Village People Youth Committee, said Wendland's background and enthusiasm made her the perfect candidate.

"She's very enthusiastic about working with kids," Kindschy said. "And her experience of running two clubs was a real selling point."

"I'm very excited about being able to have her here in West Salem," Kindschy continued. "I'm looking forward to her prior experience to help us get a good start with the club."

Wendland will be in charge of staff, site maintenance and programming. She said her top goal is to make the new club "the heart of the community."

"I want to make it the best for the community," she said. "We want it to be the center location for kids to come."

Wendland also said she looks to offer a variety of activities with the input of area youth, while focusing on the core values of the Boys & Girls Club. She said she wants to continue to build on and establish new relationships with individuals and organizations for ongoing support of the club.

Kevin Johnston, executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse, said Wendland is a good fit for the West Salem club.

"Sarah comes with the right kind of background and the experience that comes with Boys & Girls Club leaders in the communities we serve," Johnston said.

The club is tentatively set to open Monday, July 9. Wendland said some final projects are being

completed — such as painting, cleaning and carpet laying — and hopes the club will be open by then.

“The volunteers have been amazing,” she said. “We could not be where we are without the volunteers of this community.”

For more information about the club, visit the club Web site at www.wsbgc.org.

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