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Boys & Girls Club gets permanent site director

By *MATTHEW PERENCHIO* | Assistant editor

Sarah Wendland has been there since the doors first opened, and now she'll be there every time they open. On Aug. 23, Wendland was named the permanent site director of the Boys & Girls Club of West Salem Area.

Wendland started as the interim site director on June 18 and was chosen from about 20 applicants to fill the long-term position.

"I was very excited and very relieved," said Wendland, 25, a 2000 Aquinas High School graduate.

Wendland was one of four interviewed by a five-member panel made up of representatives of the Boys & Girls Club of West Salem Advisory Board and the Boys & Girls Club of Greater La Crosse.

"Sarah won the job by being very driven and doing an excellent job," said West Salem school Superintendent Nancy Burns, who sits on the advisory board and was a panel member. "Sarah is focused on the kids and she really has demonstrated that is what her first priority is, and that is what we want in a director."

Kevin Johnston, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club of Greater La Crosse, said Wendland has been a good fit since she first began at the West Salem site.

"She had a great head-start, but she also showed why she is the most qualified, and that comes with passion," he said.

Wendland, who was previously the site director for the Huber and Schuh/Mullen clubs at the start of 2006, said the West Salem club will continue to operate as it has been and she looks forward to the coming school year.

"Everything is going to be the same; now we'll just focus on the school year," she said.

Wendland said she handed out club information during area school registration periods, and that has helped membership climb to 251 as of Monday. The club, which opened July 16, is averaging 65 kids a day.

The club's new school hours will take effect Sept. 4. The club will be open 3 to 7 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays when there is no school or a snow day.

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