

REMARKS

OF

MARY LOU LEARY
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA
YOUTH OF THE YEAR AWARD
CONGRESSIONAL BREAKFAST

ON

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2013
WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Ron [Gidwitz]. I'm delighted and honored to be here. On behalf of the Department of Justice and the Office of Justice Programs, let me offer my congratulations to this year's Youth of the Year finalists. These remarkable young people represent thousands of talented youth across the country, and I speak for the Attorney General when I say we're humbled by your achievements.

I'm especially proud because I was once, too, a "club kid." That was back in those prehistoric days when boys and girls went to separate clubs – my four sisters and I went to one place and my three brothers went to another. I have the fondest memories of my time with the club, and I carry with me to this day the lessons I learned there.

It's so gratifying these many years later to continue to be associated with Boys and Girls Clubs and to help support the terrific work they do protecting kids from victimization, keeping them in school, and steering them away from trouble. These are goals that are consistent with our signature initiatives at the Department of Justice:

- Initiatives like Defending Childhood, which is working to reduce children's exposure to violence.
- There's our Supportive School Discipline Initiative, which we're doing in partnership with the Department of Education, trying to keep young people out of the school-to-prison pipeline.
- And the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, where we're working with the White House and a number of federal and local partners to help communities reduce youth violence and improve youth development opportunities.

These are all top priorities of our office – the Office of Justice Programs – and the Department of Justice as a whole, but they're also personal priorities for our Attorney General. He shares with Boys and Girls Clubs a deep commitment to the safety and welfare of our nation's young people.

And we have a long history of working directly with Boys and Girls Clubs, particularly in support of youth mentoring efforts. BGCA has blazed the trail for youth service programming in some of America's most challenged communities – like public housing where more than 400 Clubs operate, and in Indian Country where over 200 clubs serve 85,000 children.

They've also been part of our outreach to families in the armed forces, using funding from the Department of Justice to serve nearly 10,000 youth with a parent in the military. The Department of Justice has enjoyed a strong relationship for many years with Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and we look forward to continuing our partnership.

And while we celebrate our collective accomplishments, I'd like to send our best to former Board Chairman and former Deputy Attorney General Arnie Burns. I understand he's not doing very well, and I want to pass along our thoughts to him and his

family. Arnie's a lifelong advocate for children, someone who cares deeply about the future of America's youth. His passion and his actions are very big reasons Boys and Girls Clubs of America has achieved such remarkable success. We wish him well.

As we keep Arnie in our thoughts, we'll continue the good work he's been so instrumental in promoting. We'll keep working with Boys and Girls Clubs to create opportunities for our young people. We'll build on our partnership because the Department of Justice believes strongly in your mission.

So thank you all for everything you do to support our nation's youth, congratulations again to the Youth of the Year finalists, and thank you all for your time.

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