

It is hard to believe that summer is coming to an end and the beginning of a new school year is just around the corner. I have very fond memories of making the transition from summer to school, the anticipation of new classrooms and teachers, new challenges, new learning and of course, new friends. I was fortunate to have two loving parents in my home, both of whom valued education and the support necessary to be successful in school. My parents knew my teachers, what my homework assignments were, my strengths and my challenges. They helped to foster a love of learning and a deep understanding that an education was necessary for future success.

At the Boys & Girls Club of the Redwoods, we have children from various backgrounds and conversely, varying levels of familial support. School for me was one of numerous outlets in which I felt comfortable, confident and cared for. For many Boys & Girls Club members, school can be a place of pain and shame due to circumstances that are beyond their control. Many of our members go to school without having had a good night's sleep due to inadequate shelter, are hungry and are improperly clothed. The Boys & Girls Club serves copious functions particularly around academic preparedness. For the last 15 years, we have had the opportunity to help youth in our community obtain new school clothing through a program coined ChildSpree. Youth are paired up with an adult volunteer and are able to spend \$110 at Kohl's for back-to-school clothing. It is amazing how something as seemingly inconsequential as new clothing can make such a tremendous impact on a child's self-esteem. We have been blessed to have significant support from local foundations for ChildSpree over the last eight years. Due to a revised grant-making strategy, we are without that funding support this year and are asking community members to consider making a donation. If you are interested in supporting Boys & Girls Club members' back-to-school shopping needs, please visit us on the web at [GiveBGC.org](http://GiveBGC.org) 100% of monies raised for ChildSpree goes towards clothing.

If you've seen the Boys & Girls Club logo, you know that they are adjoined hands. There are many different spins on what these hands represent, my favorite is that they represent us connecting our youth with caring people in the community. Humboldt County is an incredible community with wonderfully talented and generous people. Although ChildSpree is a program that needs support, we have many needs that you can help with. If you care for youth and want to share your time, talents and or treasures, we would welcome your support. This is Liz Smith, Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of the Redwoods, providing today's Community Comment.