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**Builder of Men**

By Margot Mohsberg



Reginald "Reggie" Broddie is even more enthusiastic than usual these days. As chief professional officer of the five Boys and Girls Clubs in Anne Arundel County, he recently saw a long-awaited dream come to fruition – the completion of the new Bates Boys and Girls Club in the Wiley H. Bates Heritage Park on Smithville Street in Annapolis.

One would be hard-pressed to find more fitting place for the new club, which Reggie says is large enough to hold all of the children of Annapolis.

"It has the largest gym in the county," he says.

But it's the history that really cinches it.

The 124,000-square-foot facility was built when Mr. Bates, a self-taught African American slave who moved to Annapolis after emancipation, donated \$500 to help build Bates High School for African American students during segregation. After closing in 1981, the building sat empty, with its windows boarded up and the faces of African American leaders painted on the plywood. To the younger residents of Annapolis, it was obvious the building was once something significant, but exactly what that significance was, few still knew.

Now, thousands of children will know Mr. Bates and his dream for the community – to serve everyone. In addition to the Bates Boys and Girls Club, there is a senior activity center and a Bates Museum.

Since the opening of the club in October, seeing the children come together in the large facility "has been a beautiful thing to watch."

"To see all these children from different backgrounds in one geographic place has been wonderful," he says.

The benefit of offering children guidance and something to do during non-school hours is something Reggie has seen firsthand and it is what drives his belief in the Boys and Girls Club.

**TOWN PULSE**

What event in the Annapolis area are you most looking forward to in 2006?

- Powerboat Show  
 Sailboat Show  
 Renaissance Festival  
 Seafood Festival  
 County Fair

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Last time we asked, "**How many past issues of Inside Annapolis Magazine do you have?**" Out of all the responses, we found that **most of our readers keep at least 3 issues** of Inside Annapolis Magazine around the house, but **a couple of our readers have over several years of issues!** We're glad to hear that so many of you stay with us!

Thanks to all those that voted!

**Results Posted Every Issue!!**

"There is something to be said about helping people who can't help themselves, because they don't have the courage to speak up or they simply don't have the platform," Reggie says.

Reggie grew up in Suitland, Md, the middle child of three boys born to a self-made businessman and a school teacher. In high school, he played football, basketball and... tennis.

"My mother wanted us to be well rounded," he says.

In addition to sports, Reggie joined the Boys and Girls Club at age 7.

"A former Redskins football player ran the club and served as a mentor; I wanted to be just like him," he says. "I worked there every summer."

After graduating from high school, he was recruited to play football at Austin Peay State College in Tennessee. However, when his football coach was fired for focusing too much on his players' education rather than their season, Reggie transferred to what was then called Bowie State College.

"I was devastated by the firing," Reggie says. "He was an advocate of education and they fired him because he wouldn't let a kid play when he didn't make grades."

At home, in sports, and at the Boys and Girls Club, Reggie found plenty of what he likes to call "builders of men."

"My father always wanted to work for himself but also give back, so he gave back through his three sons and he taught us the importance of giving back ourselves," he says.

After college, Reggie became a juvenile probation officer. However, he quickly became frustrated that there was no one there to help these kids before they came to him. Eventually, he created a program for the kids he worked with, requiring them to show up every Saturday morning from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

"If I could get them to show up, I could ask them to explain how they got into the situation they were in," he says. "Then I would try to articulate what they said to the judges and hopefully figure out a way to keep them from going to the juvenile detention center."

He also used these gatherings to teach the kids the life lessons such as attention to personal hygiene and individual development, and even how to win at chess.

"The kids who went through this program did not come through the system again," he says.

Despite his efforts, Reggie eventually left his job when he felt the county where he worked was succumbing to the pressures of incarcerating kids rather than rehabilitating them.

"It forced me to go back to finding another alternative," he says.

The first Boys and Girls Club in Anne Arundel County was founded in 1988 in a small clubhouse in the Bywater community of Annapolis. Reggie joined the organization two years later and has been there ever since.

The new Bates Boys and Girls Club features a gymnasium, dance studio, an exercise room, a library and technology center, a Teen Center and a recording studio.

"We even have our own store that is operated by the kids and sells everything from wrist bands to granola bars," he says.

More than 5,000 kids benefit from the Boys and Girls Clubs in Anne Arundel County each year. Over the years, Reggie has seen many students move on to great success. One such student is William Hill, whose mother signed him up for the Boys and Girls Club when he was 6 years old as a way to keep him safe while she was working four jobs.

"The Boys and Girls Club was my home away from home," William says. "They brought out the very best in us and taught us that we can

says. They brought out the very best in us and taught us that we can do whatever we set our minds to."

As a result of his participation in the club, he was named Maryland Youth of the Year and traveled to Scotland twice. Last year, he served as president of his freshman class at Howard University.

"I did things I never dreamed I'd do and it was because of the club," William says. "Reggie helped me realize my full potential. I feel like I could call him any time, day or night."

For all his hard work and compassion, Reggie was named outstanding citizen of 2006 by the Kiwanis Club of Greater Annapolis. He was also honored by Wayne and Valerie Rodgers, co-chairs of the club's Campaign Governance Committee who donated \$25,000 to name the Regional Director's Office at the new Bates club after Reggie.

"We are constantly inspired and moved by Reggie's commitment to the youth in our community," the couple said in making their announcement at the Annual Youth of the Year Dinner.

Reggie says it feels good to know that his efforts will be remembered for years to come. However, he says he plans to stick around a while.

"I never get frustrated or lose my passion because there is that next kid that might need me even more," he says. "I always tell the kids, 'If you have two shoes, there is a kid out there that only has one. And if you only have one shoe, there is a kid out there that has none.'"

For information on how to volunteer at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Anne Arundel County, call 410-263-2542 or visit [www.bqcaa.com](http://www.bqcaa.com).

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