

MIETRO

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\$1 Million, Merger Rescue D.C. Police Clubs

Group Gets Gift From Freddie Mac, Joins With Affiliate of National Organization

By DAVID A. FAHRENTHOLD
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Metropolitan Police Boys and Girls Clubs, fixtures for decades in District neighborhoods, have been rescued from financial peril by a million-dollar donation and a merger with a similar group, officials said yesterday.

The police clubhouses—founded and partly staffed by the D.C. police department but financially independent—have become part of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington.

The move means that the police clubs will be able to continue their full range of activities at eight clubhouses throughout the city. The merger was announced yesterday amid much fanfare at a police clubhouse on Benning Road NE, complete with dancing, a double-Dutch jump-rope exhibition and a proclamation from the mayor.

"I feel like, as mayor, I'm officiating at a wedding here," Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D) said before proclaiming July 30 "The Perfect Fit for Kids Day." Williams said that the merger would "make Boys and Girls Clubs in our city even greater and even stronger."

The merger was made possible by large donations, particularly a \$1 million gift from the Freddie Mac mortgage finance corporation and the Freddie Mac Foundation.

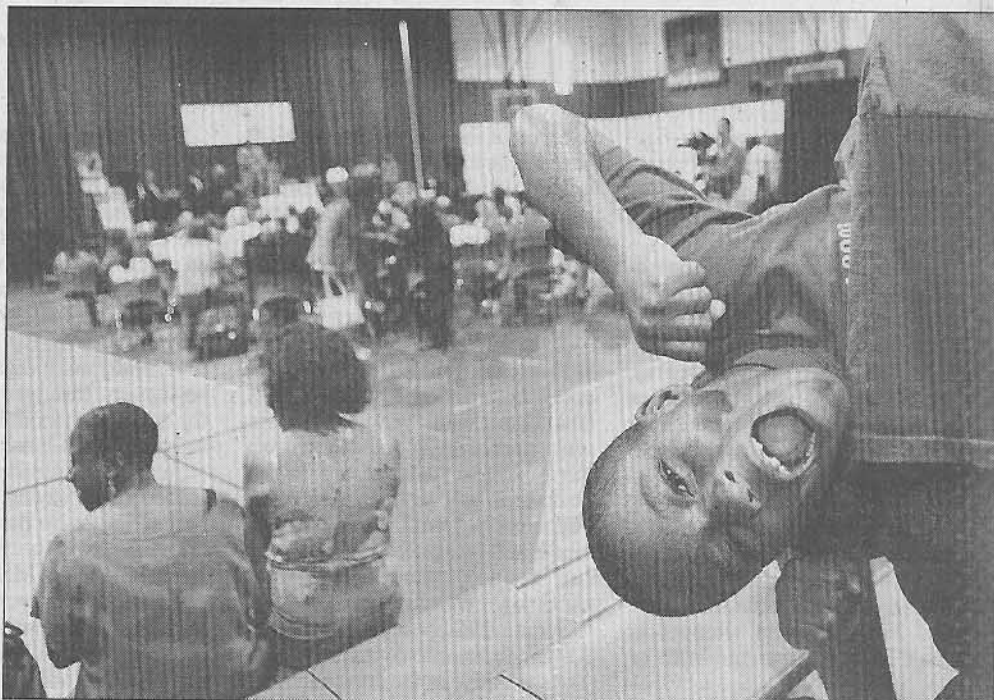
The police clubs will keep their name, and police officers will continue to work in them as coaches and mentors. But they will be run day-to-day by the other group, which is the local arm of a national charity, the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, officials said.

The police clubs were founded in 1934 by then-Chief Ernest W. Brown to keep the city's youths out of trouble.

The clubhouses serve about 5,000 children across the city, offering activities such as football, basketball and cheerleading, as well as computer and academic programs. There also is a summer camp, Camp Brown, on the Potomac River in Scotland, Md.

In the last two years, the police clubs have struggled to keep up programs because of dwindling donations—a development blamed on a drop-off in charity giving nationwide, as well as fundraising for capital projects by the police clubs that may have affected the flow of donations to cover day-to-day operations.

"There was always a possibility that we have to close a clubhouse if the funds weren't there," said



BY DUDLEY M. BROOKS—THE WASHINGTON POST

Jamal Harris, 6, gets a bit distracted during the news conference at a police boys and girls clubhouse in Northeast to announce the boys and girls clubs merger. The group also received a check.

Mark Bailen, a member of the police clubs' board of directors.

Instead, the group sought a merger with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, which operates 21 clubs in this area, including six in the District. But to make the merger work, officials said, they will need annual donations of more than \$2 million to cover the operations of the police clubs and the camp.

One pitch for contributions was made this spring at the Metropolitan Club, a swanky venue near the White House. Maxine B. Baker, president of the Freddie Mac Foundation, remembered hearing that the police clubs might have to close Camp Brown.

"I stood up and said, 'Well, how much does the camp cost?'" Baker remembered yesterday.

She said she was told \$200,000. "Okay," Baker remembered saying. "I'm in for \$200,000."

In the end, the Freddie Mac Foundation gave \$550,000, and Freddie Mac itself gave \$450,000.

At yesterday's ceremony, during which hun-

dreds of children sat in the audience, Gregory J. Parseghian, Freddie Mac's chief executive, explained the gift this way: "We're about homeownership, and you are all homeowners going forward."

He then pulled out a three-foot-long check for \$1 million. A few gasps could be heard when the big number appeared.

Other donors honored yesterday included IBM and Microsoft Corp.

Under the new arrangement, the boys and girls clubs group became the largest local affiliate of the national boys and girls organization, officials said. The police clubs' governing board will keep some authority over them.

At the ceremony, 12-year-old Antonio Terrell, who belongs to a Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington in Southeast, talked about the benefits. "My club is a safe haven for me," he told the crowd. "Every day I'm faced with peer pressure, bad things happening around me, and lots and lots of homework."