



**JOHN M. BARRY  
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB  
OF NEWTON**

.....From not making the best choices of friends to hang out with, to having an unstable father who was never around, I clearly remember, not long ago, feeling desperate for attention, mentoring, and love. My mom raised me as a single parent, then she got married. We then moved up to Massachusetts.

My mother and father (at least when he was around) gave me rules. When I would break them, there was never anything done. A life with no boundaries soon led me to make some very wrong decisions for myself that left me in a state of depression, loneliness...and sometimes worse. No one in school wanted anything to do with me and I would often get into fights with kids over things I can't even remember now. I had no one there to show me a better way. I didn't matter much at all.

One winter night, I was with a couple of friends who were members of the Boys & Girls Club in Newton. That night they brought me to the Club. I was reluctant to go, but it was warmer inside than out. I met other kids and program staff. Everyone seemed nice; different than school I did not feel out of place. They even invited me to play basketball with them despite not having met me before. I played ball, talked with other kids and some of the staff, and then played more basketball.

There were no fights with kids over stupid things. I just felt comfortable. When the building was ready to close for the night, I asked a staff member "What does it take for me to come here more often?" He replied, "Just show up."

I began going to the Club three or four days a week that month...and for many months to follow. While basketball was my game, hanging out with new friends was also very cool. I even got to know some of the staff well. It sort of came to me unexpectedly, but after a few months I realized how close I had become with the staff. They told me I "mattered." And after some time, I began to believe them. I found the mentoring that had been lacking in my life.

Today I don't get in fights at school. Today I know how to make good choices for myself; to no longer be self-destructive. And even when I mess up now or do something really dumb, it's nothing as serious as what could have happened to me years before. I try to learn from those mistakes and move on.

I am a member of the John M. Barry Boys & Girls Club of Newton.

Kevin (name changed)