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## Boys, Girls Club schedules Monte Carlo fundraiser

By HATTIE BERNSTEIN

MILFORD — Parents who send their child to the Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley pay \$40 a year for membership, a fraction of the \$1,200 annual cost per child.

Club officials say the price will probably be going up, despite ongoing fundraising efforts.

A Monte Carlo Night on June 7 is the latest fundraising endeavor. Officials are also planning more raffles, golf tournaments, auctions, and the like.

Tickets for the Monte Carlo Night, which will be held at the club, are \$50 and will buy 1,000 gambling chips, appetizers, and entertainment.

Organizers are hoping to raise \$10,000, half of the amount needed to buy a climbing wall for the local club. The Rotary Club has promised a matching grant.

"It's a hook for teens," said Dave Parker, chief professional officer of the club, of the climbing wall.

He said the wall provides opportunities for "positive risk taking" as well as leadership and learning to be responsible for others, important skills for teenagers to master.

Parker said he's hoping the Monte Carlo Night also draws attention to the club's mission: to provide a safe and healthy outlet for children and adolescents after school and during summer programs.

"This is a place you can count on," he said, ticking off a list of ever-changing factors that affect family life, including the cost of gasoline, groceries, and childcare.

Earlier this month, Alan Woolfson, chief volunteer officer and president of the club's board of directors, met with the town's selectmen to ask for an increase in financial support.

Woolfson based his appeal on dwindling government and local funding, saying club membership is growing, and mortgage payments on the new building will be due next year.

Be 'creative,' selectmen said

Selectmen, however, agreed that the club should pursue other avenues first. They didn't outright refuse to increase the town's annual \$1,000 donation, but they urged the club to be "creative" in pursuing support.

Between 170 and 200 children use the club daily during the school year. The majority of children live in Milford, although youngsters from Amherst and Wilton also participate.

Woolfson said one selectman — Jim Dannis — suggested that the club raise money by cutting down trees in the town forest and selling the lumber for fire wood, a plan club executives nixed.

"We're creating a situation where someone could get hurt, and I'm not sure if it's a good solution," Woolfson said.

The board president said he wants the town to contribute \$5,000 a year to the club, a "more realistic" amount

given the declining economy and rising costs of fuel, food, and other basics, as well as the cost of childcare.

"We have issues with gangs, layoffs, and the club is there. It can provide a safe place for kids so parents can go to work," Woolfson said. "Especially single parent homes."

When he spoke with selectmen, Woolfson said, he made every effort to impress on them the club's value in the community.

"There's lots of value that you can't see," he said. "I was a little concerned when they were asking me for hard numbers."

Meanwhile, Woolfson said, club officials are continuing to use their imaginations to come up with fundraising ideas. They're also hoping to draw a large crowd to Monte Carlo Night.

Tickets will be available at the door. But those planning to attend can also purchase them on line at [www.svbgc.org](http://www.svbgc.org).

The club is located at 56 Mont Vernon St.

Games will include craps, roulette, and black jack, and there will also be raffle prizes including a trip for two anywhere in the country on Southwest Airlines, gift certificates to local restaurants and hotels, and a Lakes Region foliage getaway.

Attendees may also participate in a silent auction.

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