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# **Hubert ‘Dickey’ Ballentine & Martin L. Mathews Mathews-Dickey Boys’ and Girls’ Club**

**By M. Karen Hubbard**

Hubert ‘Dickey’ Ballentine was born on June 18, 1911, in Sardis, Mississippi. In 1927, he moved to St. Louis where he married Rose May Grimes. They had four children. For 24 years, Ballentine served as a United States Postal Service mail handler.

Martin L. Mathews was born in Neelyville, Missouri, on February 17, 1925. Mathews and his family moved from Poplar Bluff, Missouri, to St. Louis, Missouri, where he met his wife, the late Barbara Albright. They had five daughters and Mathews served as a manager at the Burkart Randall Division of Textron, Inc.

Mathews and Ballentine coached neighborhood baseball teams. They were discussing a similar concern: a desire to keep young men on the fields and off of the streets. In 1960, under a shade tree in St. Louis’ Handy Park, they co-founded the Mathews’ Dickey Boys’ Club.

In 1961, the first special event, the Annual Awards Banquet, was held. It began in a neighbor’s basement and has expanded to very popular St. Louis hotels with well known people serving as master of ceremonies. Today, more than 1,000 young people receive trophies for their sports participation. The achievements of alumni/corporate volunteers are also recognized at this event.

The Earn and Learn Program was founded in 1968 with the assistance of a grant from Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc. This program trains junior coaches, umpires and commissioners and lets youth earn spending money. It is also the beginning of the Summer Day Camp Program which gave youth a place to go so their parents can continue to work.

Both Mathews and Ballentine were outstanding athletes. In 1974, Mathews was inducted into the Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame. In 1975, he received the Humanities Award from the St. Louis Globe Democrat (a former St. Louis newspaper). Ballentine was inducted into the Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame with a semi-pro career stretching from 1928-1954. He played in six all-star games and had a lifetime batting average of .350.

Former St. Louis Globe Democrat Publisher G. Duncan Bauman enlisted the involvement of August A. Busch III, then chairman and CEO of Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc., and Charles F. Knight, then chairman and CEO of Emerson Electric Company, to co-chair a multi-million dollar building fund to build a new home for Mathews-Dickey Boys’ Club at Kingshighway and Highway 70 in St. Louis.

In 1982, President Ronald Reagan declared the Club a model for the country and dedicated the new youth facility. He presented Mathews and Ballentine with the nation’s highest honor, the Presidential Citizens Award, for their lifetime achievements.

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In 1984, the TRI-A Program opened at the club as an alternative school for suspended youth. This program receives national recognition for its success rate in assisting youth to return to school for graduation and/or obtain the GED (General Educational Development – process of earning equivalent of high school diploma).

The Girls' Program began in 1986 with the support and direction of board member Charles 'Big Charlie' Ruprecht and advisor N. Evelyn Williams. Today, the Program serves more than 5,000 young women in the areas of personal development, cultural arts, education and athletics.

'Stamp Out Illiteracy Through Learning Program' was introduced in 1989. It provides individualized tutoring to youth needing help in math, reading, and language arts and works with the St. Louis Public Schools and other area districts.

In 1991, a city-wide Motivation Vocation Preparation (MVP) begins as a program to stop gang activity by encouraging youth to do extracurricular, structured activities promoting self-esteem, goal development and achievement. The U.S. Department of Justice's Drug Enforcement Administration awarded Mathews with a Certificate of Appreciation.

To help build up the existing Tutorial Program, a Computer Literacy Instruction Program (CLIP) was started in 1992. Students received computer training from volunteer instructors with computer expertise.

In that same year, the Reviving Baseball in the Inner Cities (RBI) Program was started to give thousands of young men and women a chance to play baseball. The RBI Program was endorsed by Major League Baseball and supported by the St. Louis Cardinals LP (Cardinal Care) along with other corporations in the area.

'The Sky is the Limit' was established to give young women career-readiness training and mentorship opportunities in 1995. Since it began, more than 2,000 women have experienced the program.

In January of 2000, co-founder Hubert 'Dickey' Ballentine died at the age of 88.

At a Board of Directors Meeting, a motion was made to change the Club's name to Mathews-Dickey Boys' & Girls' Club. The motion was voted on, passed unanimously, and announced to the public on April 10, 2001 that the name was officially changed.

In 2002, the Club became a non-profit, 501(c)3 United Way health and human service agency providing educational, sports, and cultural programs for more than 40,000 young men and women each year. (501(c)3 of the tax code means that the Club does not have to pay federal corporate income tax and donors may deduct contributions from their income tax.) The Mathews-Dickey Boys' & Girls' Club is supported through many donations and matching gifts made by different people, organizations, and corporations