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Boys & Girls Club of Woburn renamed James L. McKeown Boys & Girls Club of Woburn, Inc.

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The board of directors of the local Boys & Girls Club recently adopted a new name: James L. McKeown Boys & Girls Club of Woburn, Inc. The naming honors a Woburn native who died of a heart attack in 1996, at the age of 41.

"Jamie," as he was known to all, was a widely acknowledged business and community leader," said Dennis Clarke, McKeown's successor as president of local commercial real estate firm Cummings Properties.

The announcement was made to 250 guests during a grand celebration of the Club's 50th anniversary, held September 20 under a tent on the Club grounds.

The Club currently has 1,500 members aged 8-18 from Woburn and surrounding communities. It serves another 500 youth through community outreach programs.

McKeown attended Woburn High School and graduated from Salem State University magna cum laude in 1977. He then earned a master's degree in Elementary School Administration from University of Vermont.

With very few teaching jobs available at that time, McKeown changed his career plans and, in 1979, joined commercial real estate firm Cummings Properties as a leasing agent. He rose quickly up the career ladder, becoming leasing manager, vice president, executive vice president, and in 1990, president.

McKeown had a lifelong association with Boys & Girls Club of Woburn. He was selected "Boy of the Year" in 1974 and worked at the Club as aquatics director during his college years. He was the first former student member of the Club to be elected a director and then its president.

"Jamie's significant impact on the Club is still felt today, 18 years after his passing," said Shaun Briere, an attorney with Mawn and Mawn, and president of what will be known informally as the Jamie McKeown Boys & Girls Club. "I cannot think of a more fitting way to kick off the Club's second half-century than to honor Jamie's many contributions with this naming."

Among the guests at the celebration were McKeown's wife, Winchester resident Denise McKeown, and his daughters, Kelly and Molly McKeown. Also in attendance were 11 former Club presidents, about 20 former Youths of the Year, Woburn mayor Scott Galvin, State Senator Kenneth Donnelly, and State Representatives James Dwyer and Jay Kaufman.

McKeown was very active in the Woburn Business Association, and at the time of his death, was treasurer of the Woburn Industrial Finance Authority. In Beverly, he was the primary force behind Cummings Properties' acquisition of the former United Shoe Machinery Corporation property and its subsequent transformation into Cummings Center, the North Shore's largest office and technology park.

Each year since 1997, Denise McKeown has represented Cummings Foundation at the presentation

of two large McKeown Scholarships - one in Woburn and one in Winchester - honoring the "Most Outstanding High School Senior" in each community.

Shortly after McKeown's death, The James L. McKeown Elementary School in Beverly was named in his honor, as was the James L. McKeown Interchange of Interstate 93 in North Woburn.

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