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Volunteers get active for Boys & Girls Club

Conventioneers lend hand at YET center

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By Lynne Jensen
Staff writer

More than the check for \$10,000, Keith Boone Sr., director of the NFL Youth Education Town Boys & Girls Club, appreciated the attitude of the givers who arrived at the club on South Broad Street wearing "New Beginnings New Orleans" T-shirts.

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"They got off the bus, passed up us adults and went straight for the kids and introduced themselves," Boone said last week. "A person's time is more valuable than any amount of money."

The givers are young professionals, ages 20 to 39, who belong to an organization called Active 20-30 United States & Canada, which raises money for children in need. They are contributing a total of \$40,000 to help the NFL YET center Boys & Girls club and two more Boys & Girls clubs in Mississippi that are rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina.

The Active 20-30 group held its annual convention in New Orleans last week, with about 160 members participating, said Richard Middlebrook, a lawyer and the group's international president. The group has 1,206 members in the United States and 3,400 around the world, he said.

Middlebrook, 39, said he is saddened by the devastation Katrina and floodwater caused in New Orleans, a city he enjoyed so much during Mardi Gras 2000 that he has a tattoo of a Carnival mask on his left arm.

Middlebrook and the group's national president, Jennifer Norman, said their group received donations from all over the world for the Gulf coast Boys & Girls clubs.

Active 20-30 member Jacquie Manoukian planned the hands-on activity day at the YET center, including a Wiffle Ball tournament, pizza and an essay-writing award presentation to three

youngsters: Craig Pryor, Trunee Clark and Whitney Engram.

"Today, we're here to interact with the children," Norman said.

Meka Francis, a staff member at the YET center club, said Katrina's wrath is reflected in the number of children who attend programs at the center. About 80 children are enrolled this summer, but there were more than 200 children participating in programs there before Katrina hit, she said.

Boone, 37, said the Boys & Girls Club helped him while growing up in the 9th Ward. His childhood experiences at the club "make me want to work a little harder to show the children that you can succeed at anything," Boone said. "I made it."

Norman said she would like to get an Active 20-30 club going in New Orleans. For information about the group, visit www.active20-30.com.