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"No legacy is so rich as honesty!"

— William Shakespeare

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## River North attorney receives Union League Boys & Girls Club award

**Welcome back Tiger,  
Whisper now a shout out**



**Heart  
of the 'Hood**  
*By Felicia Dechter*

By day he's a hard-nosed trial attorney, but once Stephen Schlegel leaves the courtroom, he becomes a softhearted mentor to kids from the Union League Boys & Girls Clubs (ULBGC). And for his commitment of doing just that for the last 40 years, Schlegel was recently honored with the prestigious Boys & Girls Club of America's National Gold Medallion.

The national award is one of the highest honors the Boys & Girls Clubs of America provides to local leadership for outstanding outcome-based services to boys and girls in their community.

"The award is a high honor from an organization I've been associated with for 40 years," said Schlegel, who became a trustee of the Union League Boys & Girls Clubs in 1978, fulfilling a promise made to his Union League Club mentor to commit to ULBGC service. "I'm humbled to receive it. I know so many people who have done more."

Schlegel, an attorney in private practice, was shortly thereafter elected to be General Counsel and continues to offer countless hours of pro bono legal services to the club. Additionally, he held a position as a committee member for resource development and also is chairman of both the Legal and



Attorney Stephen Schlegel gettin' jiggy with Boys & Girls Club kids.

ing vulnerable kids in some of the city's neediest neighborhoods, currently helping 13,500 youth members annually in Pilsen, West Town, Humboldt Park, Bucktown, South Lawndale and Englewood. The club also serves court-detained youth assigned to the Juvenile Temporary Detention Program to reduce recidivism, and it staffs and manages its own 250-acre summer camp in Southern Wisconsin, a place where kids spend some time in an environment free from drugs, gangs and violence.

The club is in expansion mode and going into three more sites in Englewood this year, said Schlegel. Since 2000, 98 percent of members have graduated high school,

ter school resource for kids to get the extra educational support they need to become independent adults, an array of recreational outlets and programs that reinforce character-building and a location where children develop friendships with peers and relationships with caring, responsible adults."

"If a person just goes into a school or Boys & Girls Club in any neighborhood in the city, any tendency they have to say that a group of people is unworthy or discriminated against...you get to know how good people are in every nook and cranny in the city," said Schlegel. "They're appreciative of the help. It's very amazing."

Safety Committees. Most recently, Schlegel was instrumental in helping to reintroduce a Boys & Girls Club to the at-risk neighborhood of Englewood.

He applied for club membership in 1976, hoping to swim and play a little handball. At that time, Schlegel was told that to become a member, he had to make a promise to become involved with a couple of charities.

"I didn't know anything about charities," said Schlegel, who was born in Edgebrook, but also lived in Rogers Park, where he was a lifeguard at Pratt and Albion during his college days. "But I had to make a promise and knew I better say yes."

"From that day forward we were up and running," said Schlegel, who was lead counsel for the plaintiffs in the Vietnam War-related Agent Orange trials in the 1980s. "It's been gratifying and rewarding, a great involvement. Suddenly I find myself being called an expert on not-for-profit work and getting awards for small contributions."

Since 1919, the ULBGC has been serv-

there have been no felonies in the last 15 years, and no teen pregnancies for the last 10 years thanks to its Smart Girls program, said Schlegel.

"I've gotten to know a lot of kids," said Schlegel. "They're now coming back to their clubs to give back."

Schlegel strongly believes safety is a top priority, and he has created a Safety Committee to assist the club's staff in implementing an annual All Staff Safety training. He also leads safety seminars at national and regional conferences and conducts consultations with board members in the Midwest region.

"My work with the Union League Boys & Girls Clubs has given me an opportunity to know some of the most amazing youth, many whom come from very difficult backgrounds, face enormous daily challenges and reside in some of Chicago's neediest neighborhoods," said Schlegel, who also received the Boys & Girls Club of America President's Volunteer Service Award in 2014. "Our clubs provide a secure af-