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Love Story

Elena Matalack's philanthropic tribute to romance

BOSTON COMMON: How did you become involved in the Boys & Girls Club's board of directors?

ELENA MATALACK: When my first husband, Scott, passed away two years after our wedding, I wanted to honor his memory with something that was about life, hope and the future. With the Boys & Girls Club, I set up a fund to send kids to camp in summer, statistically the city's most violent season of the year. Several years later, when I met Tom, my current husband, I brought him to the club. He was equally impressed. At the time, I was working on Scott's fund to make it an endowment. When Tom and I got married, as a wedding gift, he met the gap in the fund to make it happen.

BC: What's your favorite club event of the year?

EM: The House Party in May. The staff and volunteers really feel like a family, which is where the name comes from, even though it's a sit-down dinner for 500 to 700 people and our main fundraiser. This year it will be at Robert and Myra Kraft's home. We're lucky to have supporters willing to share their home for the event, who say, "Sure, come crush my lawn!" One year we had to cut down a tree at the Krafts' to get the tent in there.

BC: What's the club's focus?

EM: It provides safe spaces for afterschool and weekend activities for about 14,000 kids, but it's not just "gym and swim." Yes, we have athletics and aquatics, but there's also homework help, assistance with college applications, mentoring and social workers on hand as role models and support.

BC: What's this year's goal for the club?

EM: To serve more kids with extended hours and increase our use of shared spaces. We have five freestanding clubs right now, but want to share space in schools and housing projects wherever we can.

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