



**“I am the man I am today, the father I am today, because of the Boys & Girls Club.”**

Longshoreman and ILWU Local 13 Vice President Gary Herrera remembers always being on the move when he grew up, his family packing up from one temporary apartment to the next. His parents loved him, but as they battled the demons of their heroin addictions, they couldn't provide him with a stable life.

Introduced to the Club when he was just five years old, Gary became a self-proclaimed “gym rat” usually hanging out until closing time. Through his elementary and high school years, this welcoming place that gave him safety and shelter as well as mentors who provided motivation, discipline and love became Gary's true home.

Gary played varsity basketball at San Pedro High School and received an athletic scholarship to the University of Hawaii. He returned to San Pedro where his children participated in the Club's College Bound program. Gary's son Adrian graduated from Long Beach State and was recognized as Coach of the Year by Boys & Girls Clubs of the Los Angeles Harbor. His daughter Michelle is a proud UCLA Bruin.

“It's a huge thing to be surrounded by positive influences,” explained Gary. “It gives kids the opportunity to pursue their dreams. The Clubs mold young people's lives – they molded mine.”

