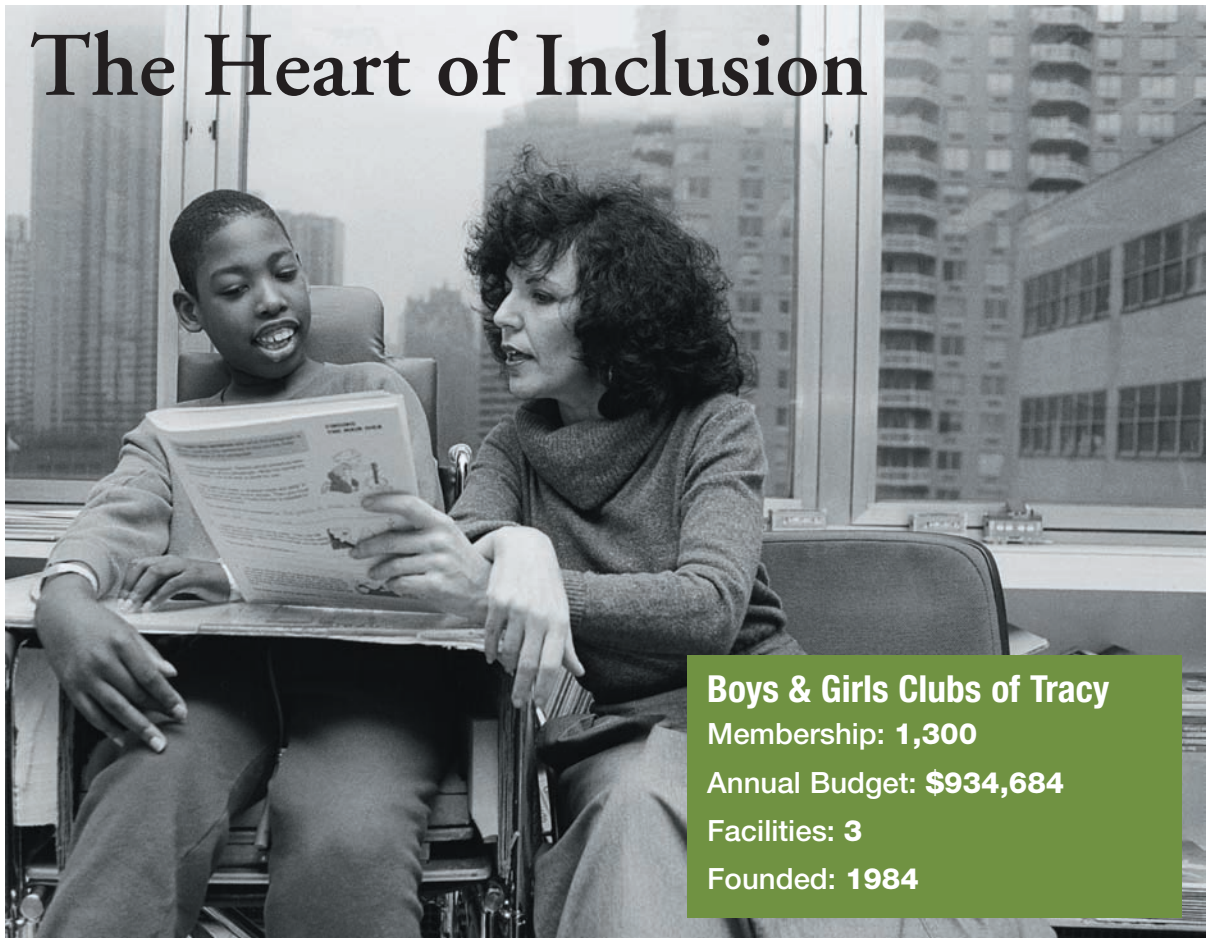


## Serving Youth With Disabilities

As part of Boys & Girls Clubs of America's ongoing commitment to diversity, the Excellence in Action articles in this issue of *Connections* feature best practices by Clubs currently participating in the Serving Youth With Disabilities Through Education and Outreach initiative. BGCA is grateful to the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation for funding this important effort and to The Allstate Foundation for its support of our Movement's diversity initiative.

These articles are part of a larger best practices series on inclusion. For additional information, please contact Marvin Laster, assistant director of health & life skills at BGCA, at [mlaster@bgca.org](mailto:mlaster@bgca.org).

# The Heart of Inclusion



**Boys & Girls Clubs of Tracy**  
Membership: **1,300**  
Annual Budget: **\$934,684**  
Facilities: **3**  
Founded: **1984**



Kelly Wilson is chief professional officer and Lisa Sughayar is unit director for Boys & Girls Clubs of Tracy.

By Kelly Wilson and Lisa Sughayar

**T**racy, Calif., is a community comprising 75,000 people. Of the 17,000 children in the school district, 1,500 are served in special education. In the Tracy community, after-school options for youth and families with disabilities are very limited.

Inclusion means that children with and without disabilities have the opportunity to share the same experiences, programs and facilities. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Tracy has been transformed into a place that produces quality programs for all youth, regardless of physical challenges.

## Change Begins at the Top

The key is to create an environment that embraces diversity. This effort begins with the board of directors and executive leadership. Your board needs to start by signing a resolution to make diversity a top priority for your Club. If support doesn't begin at the top, you will have limited success – or none at all.

The next step is having professional staff with a heart for diversity. Your organization needs a champion, someone committed to giving youth with disabilities the same access and experiences as typically developing youth. (In the past, the term “normal