

Buckner teaches boys ‘what a father looks like’

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DALLAS—Dressed in a white T-shirt and bright orange sneakers, Bishop Putney stands out in more ways than one. While five boys glue pieces of wood together, he stands over a two-by-four, his right arms sliding a handsaw across a wooden plank. A flurry of dust falls to the ground.



Dan Molinski provides careful and patient instruction to Bishop Putney at the Boy's Club that meets at the Dallas Buckner Family Hope Center at Wynnewood. (Buckner Photo / Aimee Freston) He focuses intently. The cut must be made at precisely 30 inches, just like Dan Molinski has shown him.

‘Showing us how to be a man’

“He’s very good at fixing stuff, like tables,” Bishop said. “And he’s good at making stuff. He’s showing us how to be a man—a real man.”

Surrounded by young men dressed in a variety of basketball shorts, sneakers and tennis shoes, Molinski demonstrates, in simple terms, how the base of what will be a lemonade stand is constructed. The Boy’s Club at the [Buckner Family Hope Center](#) at Wynnewood in Dallas meets every week with a purpose—to help boys grow as men and have fun.

‘Learning what a father looks like’

“For many children at the Family Hope Center, emotional and spiritual fatherlessness is the norm,” said Sarah Jones, Buckner’s ministry engagement coordinator. “Consistent, strong, compassionate and reliable men are important to every child, but they leave a powerful impact on boys.

“Dan is teaching the boys valuable lessons about respect, honesty and kindness through these weekly Boy’s Club meetings. The boys are learning more than a cooking or construction skill; they are learning what a father looks like.”

Wanted to help the community

After moving to Dallas from Columbia a year and a half ago, Molinski wanted to help the community he lived in, so he called Buckner.

“I asked Wynnewood if they needed any help,” he recalled. “I felt like I would be a good fit, and someone had just vacated the position.”



Dan Molinski teaches members of the Boy's Club at the Dallas Buckner Family Hope Center how to construct a lemonade stand. He also teaches lessons in respect, patience and kindness. (Buckner Photo / Aimee Freston) That was four months ago. Today at the Boy's Club, Molinski works individually with one boy who is attempting to saw wood and talk at the same time. Molinski and the boys use simple things to construct their projects, like heavy-duty wood glue and nails.

"I buy the supplies myself, but the costs for the lemonade stand will be minimal," Molinski said. "Most of the wood is from old pallets I find at hardware stores trash bins, and in the junk piles my neighbors leave on their curbs."

Safety first

Like a magician, he pulls out a power saw and lines it up carefully on a long block of wood. He acts like he's about to cut, then turns around to the group.

"What did I forget?" Molinski asks animatedly.

"Safety goggles!" the boys scream.

An effective team

The Boy's Club couldn't have completed projects like Spaghetti Day, wooden Texas flags and Make-A-Bench Day without the help of Erika Beck and Jennifer Hiland, Buckner life skills specialists.

"The boys are generally attentive in the class only because Ms. Erika and Ms. Jenn are so good at running a tight ship at the center," Molinski said. "I'm not much of a disciplinarian. So, I'm glad they keep the children in line."

Together, Molinski, Beck and Hiland work to give the boys the meaningful experiences. One boy in a black T-shirt looks on with a dreamy smile as Molinski cuts the rest of the two-by-fours with power saw. The smell of wood fills the air, making the room seem even more like a rustic cabin in the woods instead of a community center in the southwestern Dallas.

After every piece is taken care of, everyone claps and cheers. Boys Club isn't a one-man job. They are a team. The boys are grateful to Molinski for taking the time to invest different skills in them.

Lessons learned

"He's a nice businessman," Alex Bowman, 12, said with a smile. "He teaches us more than what we could know by ourselves."

Time is winding down, and it's time to take a vote about how the stand will be used. One boy, Keyshawn, offers up an idea, and soon, everyone talks over each other. It's a chaotic democracy of suggestions.

Eventually, everyone agrees they should sell lemonade in two sizes for 50 cents and \$1. They plan to give the proceeds to the homeless, they decide, because in the end, it's better to give than receive.