

# PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER 2025

## CCC YMCA: WHERE HEALTH BUILDS FREEDOM AND FRIENDSHIPS

There's a saying I love:

**"Good health is the first wealth, it's what gives us freedom."**

Freedom to walk where we want, travel when we want, and spend more time with the people who matter most. At the CCC YMCA, we believe that staying active, both in body and in spirit, is one of the surest paths to that kind of freedom.



For our Active Older Adults, exercise isn't about running marathons or lifting heavy weights. It's about keeping joints moving, muscles strong, and hearts healthy. Studies show that even light movement like walking, stretching or water exercise adds years to our lives and life to our years.

But just as important as exercise is connection. Loneliness has been called the new smoking and it can be just as harmful to our health. That's why the YMCA is more than a gym. It's a gathering place. Whether it's a fitness class, a coffee after yoga, or working together at one of our food distribution events, our Y is where friendships are formed and support systems are built.

We see it every day: laughter in a class, encouragement between friends on the treadmill, or a group sharing stories. These aren't small moments, they are life-giving ones.

The YMCA is proud to stand as a resource and a partner in helping older adults live longer, stronger, and better connected. Because at the end of the day, health really does equal freedom and together, we're helping our members live free.

-Tim Bartlett,  
CCC YMCA President & CEO

## STRATFORD YMCA COMMUNITY FRIDGE & PANTRY: FIGHTING FOOD INSECURITY TOGETHER

Since the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, the Stratford YMCA—together with the **Stratford Health Department, Community Services**, and **CT Foodshare**—has helped lead a bi-weekly Food Distribution at **Holy Name of Jesus Church**. This partnership began in response to rising food insecurity and continues as a vital resource for local families.

In January 2025, the Stratford YMCA expanded its efforts by opening a Community Fridge & Pantry. Located outside the YMCA building and open during all YMCA hours, the pantry provides dignified, low-barrier access—allowing neighbors to take what they need, when they need it, and giving donors a convenient place to drop off contributions.

### OUR PARTNERS & SUPPORT

Thanks to strong community partnerships, the pantry is stocked regularly:

- **Bread deliveries:** Tuesdays and Fridays
- **Produce, meats, and bakery items:** Weekly from ShopRite of Milford (Tuesdays)
- **Prepared ingredients:** Weekly donations from LongHorn Steakhouse via Food Donation Connection
- **Ongoing support:** Haven's Harvest, Food Rescue US, Town Fair Tire Foundation, Stratford Rotary, YUSA, and Food Donation Connection

Early generous funding from the **Rotary of Stratford** and **Y-USA** helped build our outdoor pantry shed and purchase a refrigerator, cabinets, shelving, and storage containers. The **Town Fair Tire Foundation** continues to provide non-perishable food and financial support to help us sustain operations.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

We are grateful for all donations—**non-perishable foods, fresh items**, and **monetary gifts**—which ensure we can continue serving our neighbors. For information or to coordinate a donation, contact: **Suzanne Richards, Executive Director – [srichards@cccymca.org](mailto:srichards@cccymca.org)**.





## LAKEWOOD-TRUMBULL YMCA PROVIDES WELLNESS IN MOTION: STORIES OF STRENGTH AT EVERY AGE

Evelyn Pravesek, a longtime Lakewood-Trumbull Y member and retired ER nurse, recently began taking Chair Yoga and Joints in Motion classes. While managing ongoing hip pain and choosing to delay surgery, she describes the relief and renewed mobility from these classes as nothing short of “miraculous”.

After years of caring for others in high-stress hospital settings, Evelyn now focuses on caring for herself—finding strength in slowing down, listening to her body, and practicing mindful movement. She’s discovered that simple actions, like controlled breathing and gentle stretching, can have profound effects on pain management, flexibility, and peace of mind.

Beyond the physical benefits, Evelyn treasures the encouragement she receives from instructors and classmates, many of whom have become friends on the same journey toward healthier living. She credits the Y’s welcoming environment with helping her stay consistent and positive even on tough days.

Stories like Evelyn’s are made possible because of supporters like you. Your gift helps us offer life-changing programs that support healing, independence, and connection for members of all ages and abilities. Together, we can ensure that more people find the strength and community they need to thrive—no matter where they are on their wellness journey.

To help support the mission of the Lakewood-Trumbull YMCA, please contact: Andrew Bramlett, Executive Director at [abramlett@cccymca.org](mailto:abramlett@cccymca.org).





## ALPHA COMMUNITY SERVICES YMCA IS STOCKING HOPE: A NEW PANTRY FOR OUR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING RESIDENTS

In response to growing threats to SNAP benefits and the rising rates of food insecurity affecting so many in our community, Alpha Community Services YMCA is taking meaningful action. We are proud to announce the development of a dedicated food pantry within our Supportive Housing programs—ensuring that the individuals and families we serve have reliable access to nutritious, essential foods.

This new initiative reflects our deep commitment to meeting more than just housing needs. By creating a pantry right where our residents live, we are breaking down barriers to food access, supporting health and well-being, and helping families focus on building brighter, more stable futures.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

**We are currently seeking donations** of non-perishable food items to help stock the pantry and make this vision a reality. Items such as canned goods, pasta, rice, shelf-stable proteins, and healthy snacks are especially needed. Every contribution—no matter the size—makes a direct and meaningful impact on the lives of our residents.

Together, we can ensure that no one in our supportive housing community has to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table.

To donate or learn more, please contact:  
Nick Hoffman, Executive Director at  
[nhoffman@cccymca.org](mailto:nhoffman@cccymca.org)



## SOUNDVIEW YMCA: AGELESS ENERGY KEEPS OUR SENIORS STRONG AND CONNECTED

Step into one of our Active Older Adult fitness classes, and you can feel it—the energy is absolutely contagious! Laughter mixes with music, and every class is filled with encouragement, high-fives, and moments of triumph. Our members cheer each other on, celebrate every milestone, and remind us daily that age is just a number.

From improving balance in **Stretch & Stability** to moving to the beat and building strength in **Cardio Fit**, these classes are about so much more than exercise. They are a place where friendships grow, confidence is rebuilt, and wellness becomes a way of life.

Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, our seniors can access programs that keep them strong in body, active in mind, and connected in spirit. Your gift ensures they have a safe, supportive space to thrive—no matter their age or fitness level.

Because at the Y, wellness is lifelong—and every step, every rep, and every smile matters.



## VALLEY/WOODRUFF YMCA: FROM PANTRY TO TABLE—COMMUNITY CARE IN ACTION

At the YMCA, strengthening community means making sure families have access to life's most basic needs—including food. Across our association, branches are working hand in hand with local partners to support neighbors facing food insecurity.

One way we're making a difference is through the Purple Pantry Box, located at our Child Care Center on Howard Avenue. This pantry, stocked in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club, is open to the community and available to anyone in need. Operated on the principle of "take what you need, leave what you can," it provides nonperishable food items to families with dignity and care.

In addition, the Valley YMCA and Woodruff Family YMCA support Walnut Hill Community Church in their monthly food distributions. Each month, volunteers from our Ys help provide groceries to 120–150 families in the community, ensuring children, parents, and seniors have reliable access to nourishing food.

Together, these efforts reflect the heart of the Y: neighbors coming together to support one another. Whether through a single pantry box or large-scale distribution events, the YMCA remains committed to addressing food insecurity and building a stronger, more caring community.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Donate nonperishable food items to the Purple Pantry Box.
- Volunteer at monthly food distributions.
- Share these resources with families who may benefit.

At the Y, we know that when we give back together, everyone moves forward.

## STRONG STARTS, STRONGER FUTURES: RACE4CHASE KIDS TRIATHLON INSPIRES YOUNG ATHLETES

This summer, the **Soundview, Fairfield, Stratford, Woodruff, and Lakewood-Trumbull YMCAs** proudly participated in the Race4Chase Kids Triathlon Program, giving children ages 6–12 the opportunity to swim, bike, run—and discover their own strength!

Race4Chase is a six-week, goal-oriented summer program designed to introduce youth to the sport of triathlon in a safe, supportive, and non-competitive environment. Participants receive expert coaching in swimming, cycling, running, strength, and flexibility while also learning about good nutrition and healthy lifestyle habits.

The program culminates in a USAT-sanctioned triathlon, where participants proudly put their new skills into action and celebrate their accomplishments with peers, coaches, and families.

Race4Chase is made possible through generous community support, and it remains no-cost to ensure access for every child. Bicycles and training equipment are provided, helping kids of all backgrounds discover the joy of movement and the power of perseverance.

Interested in supporting this transformative program? Contact Amy Wiltsie at [awiltsie@cccymca.org](mailto:awiltsie@cccymca.org) to explore sponsorship or equipment donation opportunities.

Together, we're not just training triathletes—we're building confidence, healthy habits, and bright futures.



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