CENTRAL CONNECTICUT COAST YMCA

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026

THIS YEAR'S BEST HABIT? GENEROSITY.

"It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving."
— Mother Teresa

A new year has a way of pressing the reset button. Fresh calendars. Fresh goals. Fresh starts. As we step into the year ahead, many of us ask the same question: How do I want to show up this year?

One powerful answer is generosity.

At the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA, every new year begins with hope—and that hope is fueled by people who choose to give. Your gift helps kids learn to swim, keeps teens engaged and safe after school, supports families working toward stable housing, and gives older adults a place to belong. Simply put, your generosity helps our community start the year on solid ground.

The good news? Giving is easy. You can make a gift online, by mail, or right at one of our local Y branches. As a nonprofit organization, all donations are tax-deductible, making your gift both meaningful and financially impactful.

No gift is too small to matter. Whether it's $25 or $2,500, every dollar goes to work right away, helping neighbors across our 25 towns and cities. It's amazing how a simple act of generosity can ripple out into real change.

As you set intentions for the year ahead, consider starting with a gift that strengthens others. When you give to the Y, you're not just making a donation—you're setting the tone for a year rooted in community, compassion, and possibility. Start the year strong with a gift at cccymca.org/give. Together, let's make this a year that truly matters.

— Tim Bartlett
President & CEO

POWERED BY PARTNERSHIP: A SEASON OF GIVING AT THE STRATFORD YMCA

The Stratford YMCA Food Pantry was the grateful recipient of two extraordinary gifts this fall, made possible through the generosity and partnership of our community.

In November, community champion Will McCallister issued an inspiring challenge, pledging to donate $10,000 if the community could raise $1,000 through the power of social media. The response was overwhelming. Together, friends, families, and supporters exceeded the goal by raising more than $4,000. True to his word, Will made good on his promise and proudly presented his $10,000 donation at our Stuff A Bus event, demonstrating the incredible impact that happens when one person's generosity sparks collective action.

In December, our partnership with Stratford Public Schools shined brightly when the Superintendent invited her Senior and Executive Cabinet to support the Stratford YMCA Food Pantry in lieu of traditional Secret Santa gifts. Assistant Superintendent Diana Diiorio presented a $600 donation on behalf of the group and went a step further by spending time at the Y reading to our preschoolers.

These acts of generosity reflect the deep commitment of our community partners who care for local families, not just through financial support, but through meaningful presence and connection. Together, these partnerships help ensure that our Food Pantry continues to be a vital resource for those who need it most.

A SEASON OF GIVING, POWERED BY COMMUNITY

The Lakewood-Trumbull YMCA community truly embodied the spirit of the season through our Giving Tree benefiting Alpha Community Services YMCA. From the moment the tree went up, our members, families, and neighbors stepped forward with open hearts, filling the space with generosity and goodwill. Thanks to this incredible outpouring of support, we collected a mountain of gifts to help advance Alpha's vital work providing shelter, dignity, and compassionate support to individuals and families in need.

We are deeply moved by this collective act of kindness, which brought comfort, hope, and holiday cheer to so many during a meaningful time of year. This is what the Y is all about: community coming together to lift one another up. It's this same spirit of generosity that allows the Y to continue fueling programs that strengthen families, support neighbors, and change lives, not just during the holidays, but all year long.

A WARM WELCOME MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

At our recent Home for the Holidays event, Mariah and her mother shared their experience at the Brooks Street Shelter. Her words were a powerful reminder of the impact our team has on the families we serve.

"The staff there was amazing. I especially want to recognize Kathy. Every morning, she greeted me, wished me a good day at school, and showed me love and support. On hard days, she was there for me just like the rest of the staff."

This impact is only possible because of your support.

A SENIOR PROJECT WITH HEART

As part of his senior project, Tanner is raising funds to support LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA, a powerful 12-week physical activity program designed specifically for adult cancer survivors. The program helps participants rebuild strength, restore energy, and connect with others who understand their journey.

Donations raised through this project will help provide free gym memberships for LIVESTRONG participants after they complete the program, allowing them to continue their wellness journey in a supportive and welcoming environment.

Tanner is personally involved with LIVESTRONG at the Soundview YMCA and has seen firsthand how life-changing the program—and continued access to the Y—can be for participants. The confidence, community, and renewed sense of hope it brings is truly inspiring.

Every gift makes a difference. Whether large or small, your contribution helps ensure cancer survivors can keep moving forward, growing stronger, and staying connected.

Thank you for supporting this meaningful cause.

BECAUSE OF YOU, THE BRIDGEPORT YMCA THRIVES

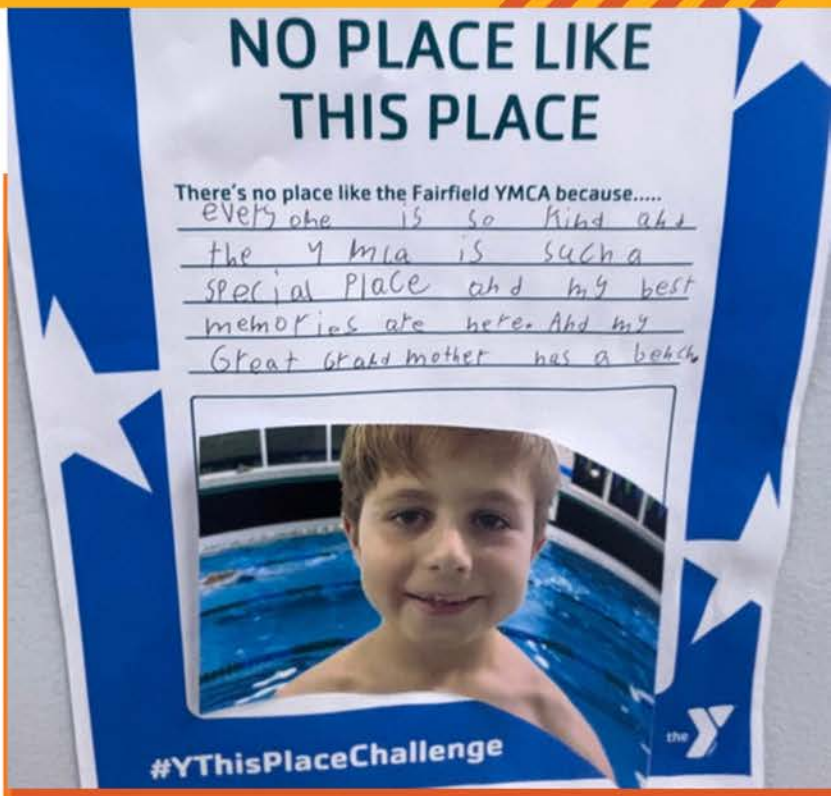
As the year comes to a close, the Bridgeport YMCA is taking a moment to reflect on the impact made possible through community support.

Thanks to generous donors and partners, the Bridgeport YMCA continues to be a place where children learn and grow, teens build confidence, families find support, and older adults stay active and connected. This work happens every day because people believe in the Y's mission and choose to invest in their community.

The Y also extends its gratitude to the Westport Woman's League for their generous contribution to the Christmas Holiday Store at the Ralphola Taylor Community Center on Thursday, December 18, 2025. Their support allowed children to shop for meaningful gifts and experience the joy of giving during the holiday season. In addition to donated gifts, volunteers generously gave their time to help children select and wrap presents, creating a warm and memorable experience for families.

Support like this ensures that individuals of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds have access to programs that promote healthy living, youth development, and social responsibility. Every gift strengthens not only individuals, but the Bridgeport community as a whole.

As the new year approaches, continued support will help ensure the Bridgeport YMCA remains a vital resource for those who need it most.



FAIRFIELD YMCA MAKING WAVES: FLYFINS SHINE AT ANNUAL SWIM-A-THON

The Flyfins Annual Swim-A-Thon made a splash this year, raising more money than ever before! We are incredibly proud of our swimmers, whose passion, dedication, and teamwork helped generate vital funds. These contributions ensure families have access to financial assistance, making it possible for everyone to be part of the team. This year's record-breaking success reflects the heart, spirit, and generosity of the entire Flyfins community.

We are especially excited to celebrate our top fundraiser, Reid, a fourth-generation YMCA swimmer carrying forward a cherished family tradition. "No place like the Y, everyone is so kind, and the YMCA is such a special place. My best memories are here," Reid shared. Following in the footsteps of his great-grandmother, grandmother, and father, Reid embodies the lasting impact and legacy of the YMCA. A bench honoring his great-grandmother serves as a touching reminder of the enduring connections that make this community extraordinary.

The Flyfins Swim-A-Thon is more than a fundraiser—it's a celebration of community, family, and the values that make the YMCA a home for generations.

WOODRUFF YMCA: A LITTLE PURPLE WAGON, A BIG IMPACT

At the Woodruff Family YMCA, kindness has a way of multiplying. Every day, our staff, interns, and volunteers work together to keep the Purple Pantry stocked with shelf-stable food, available to our community whenever it's needed.

Recently, one thoughtful Y member turned a simple act of generosity into something truly special. He donated a wagon, hand-painted purple just for the pantry to make it easier for our team to transport donations and reduce the strain of carrying heavy bags.

This small, unexpected gift has already made a big difference, streamlining our work and reminding everyone that community is built through care, generosity, and showing up for one another. At the Woodruff YMCA, it's often the little gestures that leave the biggest impact.

SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER: VALLEY YMCA PRESCHOOLERS CONNECT ACROSS GENERATIONS

This holiday season, the Valley YMCA preschoolers experienced the true meaning of giving and community through a special partnership. Thanks to the generosity of All Star Transportation, the children were transported to the Ansonia Senior Center, where they shared Christmas songs with local seniors.

The visit was filled with smiles, laughter, and meaningful connections. Center Director Jeff welcomed the children and read holiday stories, creating a warm, joyful moment enjoyed by all generations. To show their appreciation, the preschoolers presented their bus driver with a handmade holiday card, adding an extra touch of kindness to the day.

This heartwarming collaboration between the Valley YMCA, the Ansonia Senior Center, and All Star Transportation is a wonderful reminder of how community partnerships can strengthen bonds and uplift everyone involved.

FOSTERING WELL-BEING: CAMP HI-ROCK'S YOUTH-LED MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

In 2025, Camp Hi-Rock was proud to be selected for the **Y-USA Youth-Led Solutions Grant for Mental Well-Being**, an honor that highlights our commitment to supporting the whole camper—mind, body, and spirit.

This grant allowed fifty-two of our dedicated counselors and leaders-in-training to become certified in vital strategies for supporting others, recognizing when someone might need extra care, and promoting mental health through self-care. With this training, our Leaders-in-Training took their knowledge to the next level, creating innovative resources, eye-catching signage, and a welcoming, calming room for quiet conversations and telehealth appointments.

These thoughtful additions are already making a difference, providing safe spaces and tools that nurture emotional well-being. Even more exciting is the ripple effect: the lessons and resources created at Hi-Rock are designed to strengthen not only our camp community but also the broader communities we are all a part of.

We are inspired by the creativity, care, and leadership of our young team and can't wait to see the lasting impact of this project for years to come. At Camp Hi-Rock, mental well-being isn't just a program—it's a growing culture of compassion, connection, and care.

THE PLACE WHERE YOU BECOME YOUR BEST SELF

At the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA, membership is more than access to a facility—it's joining a community that supports your goals, encourages connection, and helps you grow stronger in spirit, mind, and body.

From fitness and aquatics to youth and family programs, the Y is here to help every person thrive.

Join between January 1–18, 2026, and enjoy special benefits:

- Waived joining fee
- Early access to Summer 2026 Camp registration starting January 2
- Full Y membership benefits all year
-

Plus! Explore each branch, meet our staff, and discover why the Y is THE place to belong at our Membership & Camp Open Houses on January 3rd.

This promotion is valid at all Central Connecticut Coast YMCA locations.

Give your family THE PLACE to grow, connect, and belong—join or give today and make this year your strongest yet!

UPCOMING EVENT

The Have a Heart for a Cause Gala is more than an evening of celebration it's a tribute to the Y's core values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility. This year, we are proud to honor four remarkable individuals and remember beloved Y member Robin Bova. Robin, a former Zumba instructor, brought joy and positivity to everyone she met. Though we lost her in 2023, her spirit continues to inspire our community.

The Gala supports life-changing programs such as LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA, Rock Steady Boxing, and Yoga for people with Multiple Sclerosis, providing safe spaces for wellness, healing, and connection. Your sponsorship ensures these programs remain free and accessible, giving individuals strength, hope, and community when they need it most.

By supporting the Gala, you're not just celebrating you're making a real difference in the lives of neighbors across our community.

PURCHASE SPONSORSHIPS ONLINE AT:
https://bit.ly/lakewoodgala

FOLLOW US:

@CentralConnecticutCoastYMCA

@CCCYMCA

@Central Connecticut Coast YMCA