CENTRAL CONNECTICUT COAST YMCA

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025

WHEN WE VOTE, WE BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES

"The ballot is stronger than the bullet."
– Abraham Lincoln

President Lincoln's words are a simple but powerful reminder that lasting change doesn't come from anger or conflict, it comes from participation. Every time we vote, we're helping shape the kind of community and country we want to live in.

At the Y, we believe strong communities are built when people care enough to get involved. Voting is one of the most direct ways to do that. It's not just about politics - it's about values, priorities, and hope. Each ballot cast represents someone who believes their voice matters and that they can make a difference. And your voice matters. And you can make a difference.

Social responsibility is one of the YMCA's core pillars. To us that means more than serving meals, running life saving programs, or providing safe spaces, it's also about empowering people to engage with the world around them.

When we help neighbors register to vote, share information about local issues, or even just remind our friends that their voice counts, we're living out that mission.

As another election season approaches, I encourage everyone to take a few minutes to learn about the candidates, understand the issues, and make a plan to vote. Talk with your family, your coworkers, or your friends at the Y about what matters most to you. These conversations are where community begins.

Voting is both a right and a responsibility. When we show up and take part, we send a clear message that we care. We care about our neighbors, our shared future, and the promise of democracy. Together, our ballots are stronger than any bullet, and together, we can build a better tomorrow.

-Tim Bartlett, CCC YMCA President & CEO

THE POWER OF CONNECTION: HOW THE Y HELPED WINIFRED RECLAIM HER HEALTH AND JOY

At the YMCA, we believe in the power of connection where community, health, and hope come together to create real, lasting change. For many, the Y isn't just a place to work out it's a place to rebuild strength, rediscover purpose, and reconnect with others who care.

For Winifred, that power made all the difference.

"I was faced with many health issues after being diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis," she shared. "I struggled with mobility and at one point was in and out of hospitals and rehabilitation centers. I was wheelchair-bound, and the deterioration of my health had a major impact on what was once a busy and bustling life. I tried physical therapy, but the results were minimal, and I found myself sinking into depression. Life felt drab and joyless."

Encouraged by her daughter Anika and her physical therapist Laurie, Winifred decided to try something new, swimming at the Stratford YMCA.

"At first, I wasn't interested. I couldn't swim and thought it would be a disaster," Winifred said. "But from the moment I arrived, everyone was welcoming and encouraging. They helped me feel comfortable and supported."

With the help of Coach Nacho, Coach Luis, and lifeguards Logan and Daniel, Winifred began to make progress. Her confidence grew with every class, and so did her strength.

"I started attending as many classes as I could and began to feel better. I even signed up for swimming lessons for seniors and now I'm swimming over 30 laps! I have an active social life again, and I feel like myself. At one point, I thought my life was over, but with the support of everyone at the YMCA, I am now a healthier, happier version of myself."

Winifred's story is a beautiful reminder that health and wellness go far beyond physical fitness. They're about belonging, purpose, and connection, the heart of what the Y provides every day.

When you support the YMCA, **you support life-changing programs** for people like Winifred. Your membership, your donations, and your volunteer hours make it possible for seniors to regain strength, for families to stay healthy, and for individuals of all abilities to find community and joy.

Together, we're building a stronger, healthier community; one story, one connection, one lap at a time.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: PAUL SOULIER STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE Y

At the YMCA, we believe that **building strong communities starts with people who care**, people who show up, get involved, and inspire others to do the same. One of those people is Paul Soulier, a Fitness Attendant at the Lakewood-Trumbull YMCA and a dedicated Election Moderator for the Town of Monroe.

Paul has a long history of civic engagement. Before serving as an Election Moderator, he worked as an Assistant Registrar of Voters and as a Tabulator, helping ensure local elections run smoothly and fairly. His commitment to service reflects the very spirit of the Y strengthening communities through responsibility, integrity, and connection.

When asked what motivates him, Paul shared a simple but powerful message:
"Voting is your constitutional right. If you don't vote, you have no right to complain!"

Paul's words are a reminder that participation is key to shaping the kind of communities we want to live in. Whether you're casting a ballot, volunteering your time, or supporting others in their health and wellness journey, your involvement matters.

As we approach another election season, the YMCA encourages everyone to **get informed, get involved, and make a plan to vote.** The Y is proud to be a nonpartisan organization, we do not endorse candidates or political parties. Instead, we focus on empowering individuals with the tools and confidence to make their voices heard.

Inside the Y, Paul helps members reach their health and wellness goals. Outside the Y, he helps his community reach decisions that shape the future. Both roles are vital to building stronger, more connected communities and we're proud to have Paul as part of our Y family.

ALPHA COMMUNITY SERVICES YMCA OPENS COLD-WEATHER SHELTER IN BRIDGEPORT

As temperatures begin to drop, the **Alpha Community Services YMCA (ACSY)** in Bridgeport is once again opening its doors, and its heart, to those in need. Beginning this month, ACSY will serve as the region's cold-weather shelter, providing life-saving care and support for individuals experiencing homelessness.

From **November through April**, the shelter offers a **safe, warm place to rest** for up to **55 guests each night**. Every person who enters is welcomed with compassion, a hot meal, and the dignity they deserve. Guests receive both **dinner and breakfast**, ensuring that no one leaves hungry or without care during the harsh winter months.

This important program reflects the very core of the YMCA's mission; strengthening community through **caring, responsibility, and respect**. The shelter not only provides immediate relief but also connects individuals to long-term resources that can help them rebuild stability and hope.

None of this would be possible without the kindness of supporters like you. Your generosity allows us to continue providing warmth, nourishment, and safety when it's needed most.

Together, we can make sure that no one in our community is left out in the cold.

Please consider making a donation today to support the Alpha Community Services YMCA and help keep our neighbors safe this winter.

FAIRFIELD YMCA: SHOWING UP FOR EVERY CHILD, EVERY FAMILY, EVERY MOMENT

At the Fairfield YMCA, we believe in **showing up for every child, every family, and every moment that matters.** Madison's story is a reminder of just how powerful that commitment can be.

When Madison first came to the Y, she was an older beginner swimmer, nervous and unsure of herself. After her first class, she and her dad left in tears. But our staff, Maureen and Amanda, didn't let that be the end of her story. They followed them to the parking lot, offering reassurance and encouragement. Week after week, they met Madison where she was, **helping her build confidence and strength, both in and out of the water.**

Eventually, Madison joined our swim team, where she found not only her stride but a **community that celebrated her growth.** When tragedy struck and Madison suddenly lost her father, her Y family stepped in once again. Through the support of our donors, we were able to offer her a scholarship so she could continue swimming, surrounded by teammates and mentors who had become her support system.

Madison's journey embodies the heart of the Y, a place where care, connection, and courage come together to transform lives.

As the year comes to a close, your gift ensures that the Y can continue to say "yes" to families like Madison's. Every donation, no matter the size, helps us provide financial assistance, sustain essential youth programs, and **create spaces where everyone belongs.**

This season, please consider making a tax-deductible gift to the Fairfield YMCA. Together, we can make sure every child has the chance to find their confidence, their community, and their smile, just like Madison.

Give today. Change a life.

SOUNDVIEW FAMILY YMCA PARTNERS WITH BRANFORD ROTARY TO SUPPORT NEIGHBORS IN NEED

The Soundview Family YMCA and the Branford Rotary have joined forces to make a difference close to home by installing a Purple Pantry Box at the Y. This community pantry provides **free, 24/7 access to food and personal care items for anyone in need**, no questions asked.

Located right at the YMCA, a trusted and welcoming community space, the pantry stands as a symbol of compassion and connection. It invites neighbors to both **give and receive support**, helping ensure that everyone has access to essential items while preserving dignity and care.

This partnership helps combat **food insecurity** across Branford and the surrounding towns, showing the power of what's possible when organizations unite for a shared purpose. 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 food distribution events, the YMCA remains deeply committed to **building a stronger, more caring community**.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- **Donate** nonperishable food and personal care items to the Purple Pantry Box.
- **Volunteer** at our 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**.

BECAUSE THE BEST GIFTS CAN'T BE WRAPPED

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

As the year winds down and we look towards the calendars to final page, it's natural to look back and take stock of what mattered most. For many of us, it's not the stuff we bought or the titles we earned, it's the people we helped, the moments we shared, and the difference we made together.

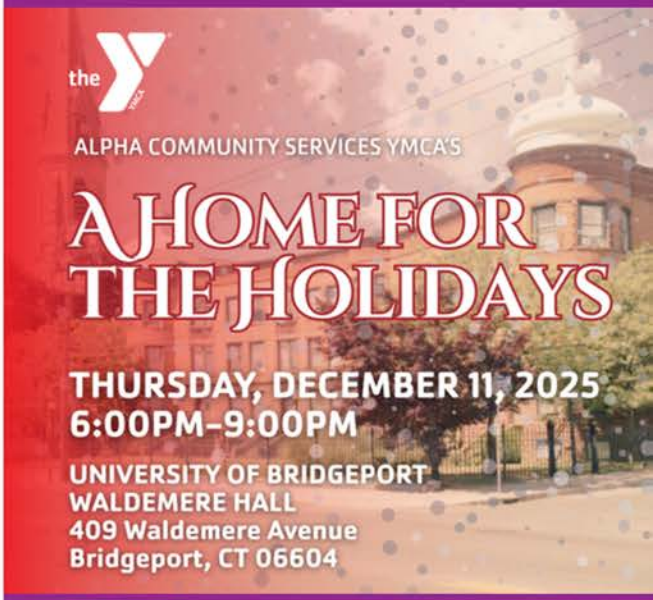
That's what the CCC YMCA is all about. Every swim lesson, campfire story, fitness class, and meal served to a neighbor in need is made possible by the generosity of people like you who believe in strengthening community. End-of-year giving is one of the simplest, most impactful ways to do just that.

Here's the best part: it's easy. You can make a gift online, by mail, or right at your local YMCA branch. And because the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA is a 503(c) nonprofit organization, your donation may be tax-deductible, a win-win for you and our community.

Whether it's $25 or $2,500, your contribution helps kids learn to swim, supports families finding safe housing, and gives older adults a place to belong. Every gift, no matter the size, helps build a stronger, healthier, more connected community for all.

As we wrap up the year, let's keep the spirit of giving alive. Because when you give to the Y, you're not just donating to a cause - you're investing in people, in hope, and in the belief that we're better together.

Make your year-end gift today at **cccymca.org/give** and help us start the new year strong... **together**.



UPCOMING EVENT

The holiday season is about warmth, community, and giving. At Alpha Community Services YMCA, we are committed to bringing hope and stability to families and individuals experiencing homelessness in Bridgeport and the surrounding area.

Every day, we see the challenges of homelessness children without safe places to sleep, parents struggling to keep jobs, and neighbors searching for a path forward. Alpha is more than shelter; it's a community that helps turn houses into homes and restores dignity and hope.

This December, we invite you to support **A Home for the Holidays**. Your generosity will provide safe shelter, essential resources, and the joy of the season for families in need. Together, we can ensure every child and family experiences the holidays with comfort and dignity.

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

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