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CENTRAL CONNECTICUT COAST YMCA PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER cccymca.org SUMMER 2023

# VOLUNTEERS – THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE YMCA

Dear Friends:

David Stevenson
President & CEO

I hope that this message finds you and your families well and looking forward to a great summer. On April 27th, we held the 164th Annual Meeting of the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA (CCCY). We gave reports, celebrated successes, identified challenges, and recognized new and retiring board members. And then it was onto the main event - our CCCY Volunteer Celebration! Why the big deal, you may ask? Let's pause for a moment and think about the Y's resources. They include a strong brand, a growing membership, great staff, many properties, successful fundraising, solid finances, and the effective use of technology to tell our story. But by far, our most important resource is the corps of volunteers who dedicate themselves to serving others through the Y. And it has always been this way dating back to 1844 when George Williams conceived of the YMCA in London, England. What a thrill it was, then, to celebrate true volunteer excellence by recognizing the Youth and Adult Volunteers of the Year from each of our 11 branches. These girls, boys, women, and men have done everything from pulling weeds from their branch's front lawn to raising millions for scholarships and new facilities.

Preston Tisdale

There are two gentlemen who have recently received the CCCY's most prestigious recognition – the H. Richard Brew YMCA Volunteer of the Year Award, and have served the Y in very different ways. Preston Tisdale, the 2022 Brew Award recipient is a highly accomplished and sought-after lawyer who has brought his passion and expertise to the Y as a *policy volunteer* - one who works on Y boards to develop strategy to strengthen the Y and advocate for those issues presented in our Real-Time Strategic Plan including youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Preston has been a great leader for our Y for the past 33 years.

Edward Piendl

Eddy Piendl was honored as the 2023 H. Richard Brew YMCA Volunteer of the Year. Eddy has demonstrated exceptional character, leadership, enthusiasm and caring for those less fortunate. Although he has served on and led boards and committees, and is an excellent fundraiser, we think of Eddy as a *program volunteer* – one who wants to make an impact by working directly with a program, group or individual. Eddy's volunteer service has focused on preparing apartments and houses so that clients from our Alpha Community Services Y struggling with chronic homelessness can move into a permanent and supportive home. Eddy has been a great leader for our Y for the past 30 years.

In a typical year, our Y family will include 3,500 program and policy volunteers donating 45,000 hours of service. Thank you to our incredible volunteers that bring our YMCA mission to life every day. You really are the heart and soul of the Y.

Best wishes for a safe, happy, and healthy summer.

Dave

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**BRANCH LOCATIONS**
**Alpha Community Services YMCA** Bridgeport
**Bridgeport YMCA**
**Fairfield YMCA**
**Hamden/North Haven YMCA**
**Lakewood-Trumbull YMCA**
**New Haven YMCA Youth Center**
**Soundview Family YMCA** Branford
**Stratford YMCA**
**Valley YMCA** Ansonia
**Woodruff Family YMCA** Milford
**YMCA Camp Hi-Rock** Mt. Washington MA
**Association Office** New Haven

**OUR MISSION**
**To put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.**

# OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

The Central Connecticut Coast YMCA welcomes two new members to the Board of Directors - **Andrea Kovacs** and **Alice Mao**.

**Andrea** (L) is a dynamic leader with a diverse background who is presently the Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing at Albertus Magnus College.

**Alice** (R) is an MBA Candidate at the Yale School of Management and a Non-Profit Board Fellow.

Retiring from our Board of Directors are Dr. Joe Bertolino (8 yrs.), Jim Dillman (4 yrs.), and Rachel Warne (2 yrs.). We are grateful for their hard work and dedication to our mission.

# CARING COUNSELORS AND YOU

There's a kindergartner attending the Valley Y Day Camp Program who is very eager to spend the summer being with friends and counselors. We already know Charlie because he is a participant in the Y's after-school program.

Unfortunately, in school, Charlie exhibits some poor behaviors and has trouble getting along with his classmates. Yet at the Y, Charlie talks with his peers and makes friends. He tells us when he is upset and doesn't act out. Charlie's father died two years ago, and it has been a difficult time at home including many financial burdens.

This June, Charlie was been welcomed back to the Valley Y Day Camp Program where he will have another positive summertime experience. His mother and siblings will also have an opportunity to experience the Y as they have been offered a full family scholarship. Thanks to the Y's Annual Campaign and the generosity of many donors, the Y is something that Charlie and his family will always remember. Thank you for making the work of the Y possible.

Please consider a donation to our Annual Campaign! And attend one of our upcoming events:
**Stratford YMCA Golf Tournament: Monday, August 7 at the Mill River Country Club**
**Bridgeport YMCA Sip & Swing: Tuesday, September 7 at the Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course**
**Soundview Family Y Golf Tournament: Monday, September 11 at Lyman Orchards Golf Club**

Volunteers and staff of the Alpha Community Services Y extend a heart felt thank you to those who participated in the 22nd Walk To End Homelessness on Saturday, May 20. Despite the rain, it was a beautiful day and we were able to surpass our event fundraising goal!

The 42nd Annual Lakewood-Trumbull Y Golf Tournament held on Monday, May 22 had a record number of sponsors and players, plus a golf ball drop! Volunteers from the Stepney Fire Department joined us with their hook and ladder, dropping a bucket of numbered golf balls onto the green. The ball that came closest to the cup, won! The winner kindly gave their prize back to the Y!

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# PARTNERS UNITE TO HELP 2nd GRADERS LEARN TO SWIM

The goal was to teach every Branford second-grader water safety skills and how to swim. As a town with 20 miles of shoreline, it is imperative that children know how to be safe in and around the water. Their project's final grade? A+!

The Soundview Family Y, under the leadership of Executive Director, Matt LaPrino and Aquatics Director, Alexandra Hunter, has partnered with the Branford Public Schools (BPS) and the Branford Parks and Recreation Department to bring this exciting new initiative to area families. Also making this effort possible are BPS bus drivers, Y bus monitors, and BPS athletes and coaches. And joining this great team are the Y's swim instructors and Southern Connecticut State University Swimming and Diving Team athletes and coaches who have come together to make this six-week after-school program so successful.

Over fifty second graders participated, twice a week. Each child learned water safety skills and based on their comfort in the pool, basic swim lessons. Instructors spent group and one-on-one time with each child customizing their approach to the group and individual's ability.

Not only were children exposed to the water and the pool, they gained confidence by learning a life skill. You could see the joy on their wet faces and hear their laughter school-wide.

# MORE SPACE = MORE KIDS

The New Haven YMCA Youth Center is seeing a record number of youth visiting the Howe Street center each day. Y Leaders, Y Teachers and other community partners are excited to be working with neighborhood youth from preschool to high school.

There is now a room devoted to gross motor development for those attending the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds. A complete redesign transformed a room previously devoted to rentals, into a school-age science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) center, filled with age-appropriate games, activities, and art projects.

Thanks to grants from several funders and the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Education, three rooms have been newly painted with new floors and equipment installed, so that the YMCA can expand its preschool program to include toddlers. Registration is now being taken for their new full day toddler program for 1- and 2-year-olds. Two rooms will be used as typical classrooms while a third will be used for gross motor development.

As part of the curriculum, all toddlers and preschool participants use the Aquatic Center to swim and practice water safety skills, a program unique to New Haven, but not the Y.

A new batch of high schoolers have found the Y to be their home away from home, dropping-in for a friendly (albeit competitive) game of basketball or to connect with one of the Y leaders who has become their mentor and friend.

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# TELLING OUR STORY

It is imperative that we help our communities understand the impact made by the Y. Informing our elected officials influences the policies that affect our work, helps build relationships with the local decision makers, and has the ability to create positive change in the communities we serve. We recently met with our elected representatives at the Connecticut State Capitol during YMCA Advocacy Day on Wednesday, May 10 to continue this important work.

# NEW EQUIPMENT!

We're always looking at ways to upgrade our facilities, add new equipment and make visiting the Y a positive experience. At the Stratford Y, new playground equipment has been installed just in time for outdoor summer fun. When you visit the Soundview Family Y, you'll be able to recharge your car while you're recharging yourself in the Wellness Center. Coming soon are EV Stations at the Woodruff Family Y.

# WE'RE VERY PROUD

(L-R) Erin, Jessica, Colleen

Congratulations to our 2023 YPN (YMCA Professional Network) awardees! Each year YPN Chapter 3, which includes all Connecticut and Rhode Island YMCAs, recognizes outstanding Y staff members. This is a way to show appreciation for what best exemplifies the significant impacts accomplished in our community.

Erin Kelly, Hamden/North Haven YMCA and New Haven YMCA Youth Center District Executive Director, received the Youth Development Award; Jessica Speer-Holmes, YMCA Camp Hi-Rock Executive Director, received the Community Collaboration Award, and Colleen Villano, Soundview Family YMCA Health and Wellness Director, received the Raising the Bar Award!

# THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO, CCCY LIFESAVERS!