Dear Friends:

I hope that this newsletter finds you and your families well and enjoying a great summer. In past newsletters, I have shared how the Y is fulfilling its mission in our core areas of service including youth development and healthy living. I find that most people I speak with have a fair understanding of the Y’s work in these important spaces. When asked about their view of what the Y does, most people will respond with something such as, “kids, gym and swim.” Although the Y offers a comprehensive list of programs and services in youth development and healthy living (much more than gym and swim!), America recognizes this part of the Y. It’s when I talk about the third core area, social responsibility, that the quizzical looks begin. To help others understand our important work in this area, I begin by sharing our social responsibility belief statement which is: *We believe that the Y has been given the honor, resources, and responsibility to strengthen the foundations of community and family.* In other words, we have been given a lot, and we must do good work every day to improve our communities, and help youth and adults grow in spirit, mind, and body.

A great way that we do this work is through one of the Y’s signature programs called Togetherhood, a member-led volunteer service initiative focusing on strengthening community. The program aims to deliver lasting social change by addressing the social isolation, disconnectedness, and lack of civic engagement found in many communities. Y members from all backgrounds work with their neighbors and community partners to plan and lead volunteer service projects that respond to local community needs. By working in small groups, members make new friends, improve their own well-being, and make their community stronger. I am proud to share with you that since beginning this initiative two years ago, members of our Central Connecticut Coast Y family have developed 10 Togetherhood programs involving 184 members. Projects have included food collection and distribution, organizing blood drives, building playgrounds, and preparing for summer camp, to name few. And projects often include some social time, when Togetherhood members can gather, relax, and get to know each other. If you would like to learn more about Togetherhood or how to start a program at your Y, please contact your Branch Y Executive Director.

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

[Signature]

David Stevenson
President & CEO
SUPPORTING OUR MISSION

The Central Connecticut Coast YMCA Board of Directors and Board of Trustees provide guidance to ensure that our vision and strategy align with our mission. These generous volunteers are critical to our success.

We enthusiastically announce James (Jay) McGuinness as Chair of the Board of Directors and Chief Volunteer Officer. Jay began his CCCY volunteer career as a member of the Hamden/North Haven YMCA Board of Managers nine years ago and has continued to provide leadership especially influential with our Property Development Committee.

Our outgoing Chair, Blanca Kazmierczak, will be greatly missed. We can not thank her enough for leading us through the most challenging of times. Blanca will continue to sit on our Board of Directors as well as on the Board Development Committee and Bridgeport YMCA Board of Managers.

We would like to welcome Rachel Warne to the Board. Rachel is a Yale School of Management Non-Profit Board Fellow.

2022 H. RICHARD BREW YMCA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR
PRESTON TISDALE

The H. Richard Brew YMCA Volunteer of the Year Award was established in 2005 as a way to honor the thirty-five years of volunteer service to the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA offered by H. Richard Brew. While given upon his retirement from the Association Board of Directors, it is intended that his legacy be honored each year by presenting this award to a volunteer who has demonstrated character, commitment and long-term dedication to the YMCA.

It is our distinct honor and privilege to recognize Preston Tisdale, as the 2022 H. Richard Brew Volunteer of the Year! Preston has served on the YMCA Board of Directors since 1990, and for thirty-two years has demonstrated exceptional character, leadership, and commitment allowing the Y to grow and positively impact the lives of thousands of youth, families, and adults. He joined the board of the YMCA of Greater Bridgeport as the representative from the Ralphola Taylor Community Center where his Y roots were established. Preston’s commitment and passion were fully demonstrated again when on May 23, 1991, he presented the Ralphola Taylor Community Center as an organization worthy of Branch status within the YMCA movement – a recognition that received unanimous support from the Y’s Board of Directors and the YMCA of the USA.

It did not take long for Y volunteer and staff leaders to recognize Preston’s leadership qualities. He enthusiastically accepted progressively more challenging assignments, and in May, 2006, was elected as the Chairman of the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA Board of Directors. Since then, Preston has served as the Chair of the Y’s Board Development Committee, Chair of the CEO Search Committee, and Vice-Chair of the Y’s Board of Directors.

Immediate Past Board Chair, Blanca Kazmierczak, shared “for more than 30 years, Preston Tisdale has been a thoughtful, caring, and passionate leader for our YMCA. His enthusiasm, experience, expertise, and leadership have continually moved our Y forward. He has touched thousands of lives in a very positive way, and we are deeply grateful for his service.”
The Central Connecticut Coast YMCA proudly held its first session of the national program, LIVESTRONG at the YMCA, this past spring. The free 12-week exercise program, designed for cancer survivors, culminated on May 25 with a graduation event celebrating their strength and perseverance. LIVESTRONG at the YMCA is a research-based program that offers people affected by cancer a safe, supportive environment to participate in physical and social activities focused on strengthening the whole person in spirit, mind and body.

At the Soundview Family YMCA, 14 cancer survivors from Branford, Clinton, Guilford, Hamden, Milford, and New Haven, ranging in age from 34 to 83 participated in the pilot program. Participants met twice a week with trained YMCA cancer exercise instructors. The groups enjoyed exercising and interacting with each other in the Wellness Center, trying a variety of Y classes based on their interests, learning meditation and relaxation exercises, stretching, and more.

Within a few sessions, 52-year old breast cancer survivor Anne-Marie said, “I was surprised, after entering the sessions fatigued; I always left in high spirits, energized, and buoyed up on the ride home!” Before being diagnosed with small cell lung cancer, Suzanne was faithfully running 5–7 miles every day. Today, Suzanne is in active treatment and completed the program in May saying, “I thought cancer took away my ability to run every day. LIVESTRONG helped me find another way to be healthy and active. It helped to be with other warriors like myself……the program gave so much more than I imagined!” Like Anne-Marie, participants showed significant improvement in aerobic function, strength, flexibility, balance, and overall sense of well-being.

The program supports the increasing number of cancer survivors who often struggle between completing treatment and feeling well enough to return to everyday activity.

“With programs like LIVESTRONG at the YMCA, we are able to meet our mission by addressing the limited availability of physical activity programs designed specifically for cancer survivorship,” shared Colleen Villano, Soundview Family Y Health and Wellness Director. Colleen has a wealth of LIVESTRONG program experience which has been a blessing for the participants and a strength for the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA.

To date, the LIVESTRONG at the YMCA program is available in over 145 Y’s throughout the country and has helped more than 13,000 cancer survivors. Plans are underway to expand the program within other Central Connecticut Coast Y branches to serve additional survivors throughout the area.

The next session of LIVESTRONG at the YMCA begins in September at the Soundview Family YMCA. To learn more, contact Colleen Villano at cvillano@cccymca.org.
LOOK AT US, WE CAN SWIM!

Every Monday and Wednesday preschoolers at the New Haven YMCA Youth Center participate in a ‘learn to swim program.’ No other New Haven preschool offers a similar program. Participants range in age from 3-5 years old.

The program started in November 2021, after a hiatus due to the pandemic. When the preschoolers first started to swim, very few had been in a pool, ocean or lake, or knew how to swim. Our first goal was for the students to learn to be safe in and around water – acclimation was the primary focus.

The level of excitement that surrounds the program is immense! As the staff open the center door to greet parents at morning drop off, the most frequently asked question is, “Hey, hey, is today swim day?” When the answer is, “yes,” the cheers ensue. Swim suits and towels are passed out and off each class goes to the pool area ready to learn with much enthusiasm!

As seasons have changed, so have the swimming abilities of the preschoolers. Stroke development, floating, feeling comfortable to jump into the pool to one of the swim instructors, swimming independently around the shallow end and just simple confidence in the water. Once goggles were introduced, they became unstoppable! Everyone moved from puddle jumpers to bubbles as their swimming abilities grew. They’re even swimming full laps of the pool with their swim instructors!

KIDS CAN JUST BE KIDS

With twelve unique day and overnight camp programs – YMCA Camp Hi-Rock, the Bridgeport Y and the Ralphola Taylor Community Center, Camp Badakookala at the Fairfield Y, Hamden/North Haven YMCA Camp Mountain Laurel, Camp Wepawaug at the Woodruff Family Y, Lakewood-Trumbull Y Camp Tepee and Gymnastics Camp, Camp Nonoma at the Soundview Family Y, Soundview Family Y Camp Hays in East Haven, Camp Parrot Perch at the Stratford Y and the Valley Y at the Holy Rosary Church – over 3,550 youth have the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve while being active and healthy in a safe, nurturing environment. What a great summer it is to be a kid!

One out of every five campers are able to enjoy the YMCA thanks to your generosity, through scholarships provided by our ANNUAL CAMPAIGN. We see their smiles! Please know that your support brings more joy than you may realize.

Help us support our youth, families and those who need us most, please consider a financial donation to our ANNUAL CAMPAIGN by visiting www.cccymca.org/makeadifference/give.

DONATE FOR A BETTER US.