



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT COAST YMCA PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

cccymca.org

FALL 2019

## TEACHING OUR KIDS HOW TO SWIM – A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY!

Dear Friends:

I am thrilled to report that the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA taught 12,754 kids how to swim and be safe around the water in 2018. That was a record year for our Y, and demonstrates how hard our volunteers and staff work towards achieving our goal – *to teach all kids how to swim and be safe around the water by twelve years of age*. Our traditional pre-school, progressive, and teen swim lesson programs continue to be well received, and the Y's Safety Around Water (SAW) Program grew again in 2018. And our commitment to serving all, regardless of ability to pay, has allowed us to broaden our reach and strengthen our impact. But, I dare say, it's not enough.

What do I mean by this? Simply stated, there are thousands of kids living in the communities that we serve who are not learning how to swim. And often times, this awful condition is highlighted when a tragic accident or drowning is reported on the news. This issue really hit home for me when I learned about a group of seventh graders from a suburban school district that visited one of our outdoor aquatic centers for their end-of-the-school-year party this past spring. Following our safety practices, we made sure that every participant was swim tested before the party could begin including swimming one length of the pool and treading water for 30 seconds. I am saddened to report that one-third of the kids could not pass the test, and could not join their friends in the pool. There were many tears, and you can imagine the embarrassment and shame that these kids felt.

I, too, am embarrassed. It is the Y's responsibility to reach out and get *all* kids involved in swimming lesson and water safety programs. But I am also embarrassed for the parents of these 7<sup>th</sup> graders, many of whom attended the party and watched their child fail a basic swim test. Can you imagine how these parents must have felt knowing that they were not attending to one of their child's basic needs – knowing how to swim? I hope that this experience serves as a "wake-up call" for these families.

So this is the *shared responsibility* that I'm talking about. We, the Y, need to continue to expand opportunities for kids to learn how to swim and be safe around the water. We also need to make sure that we're breaking down the barriers that are getting in the way of parents enrolling their kids in a swim lesson program. When I speak with parents about these barriers, many will tell me that *they* do not know how to swim and are fearful of their kids getting near the water. A great way to address that barrier is for those parents to sign up for our adult swim lesson program!

Thank you to all of our generous donors and volunteers who make the work of the Y possible. You're making a huge difference in the lives of many children and their families.

Best wishes to all for a safe, happy and healthy fall season!



David Stevenson  
President & CEO



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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**  
**Ralphola Taylor Community Center YMCA** Bridgeport  
**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.

## ANNUAL CAMPAIGN AND CLOSING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP

As a young man growing up in the City of New Haven, Tim saw crime, violence, extreme poverty and high statistics mounting against him and his ability to succeed. A child of a single mother, he knew the high probability that he too would turn to the dangerous streets and face an uncertain future. Tim found his stable place in the New Haven YMCA Youth Center where he would "drop in" for a safe afterschool plan. There he met other youth his age also looking for alternatives and opportunity. Tim and his peers played basketball, enjoyed healthy snacks and most of all, developed the emotional, social and academic skills he needed to not only survive, but thrive.

In the Spring of 2019, Tim was accepted to all fourteen colleges he applied to and was offered full financial aid to assist with his higher education plans. He credits his positive path and bright future to the New Haven YMCA Youth Center, its staff, its financial aid and most of all the positive role models and mentors he gained so much from.

This Fall, help other youth, like Tim, reach their fullest potential **DONATE FOR A BETTER US** Visit [www.cccymca.org/makeadifference/give](http://www.cccymca.org/makeadifference/give) today to **DONATE FOR A BETTER US**. If you are interested in learning more about how you can help the Y achieve the 2019 Annual Campaign goal, email Amy at [awiltsie@cccymca.org](mailto:awiltsie@cccymca.org).



Community Leaders, Y Volunteers and Staff recently gathered for a 2019 Mission Celebration. The great work at the New Haven YMCA Youth Center was shared. Strategies for future programming and ways to involve more youth were also discussed.

## LITTLE GARDENS REAP BIG REWARDS

The Valley YMCA is proud of the strong community partnership we have with the Valley United Way. When the Valley United Way began to tackle the Valley's major food insecurity, they choose the Y as a location for their Garden Bed Program. With the help of donors and sponsors, they made it possible for our neighborhood to have community gardens.

The gardens were built to help the food insecure obtain fresh fruit and vegetables. We were able to provide fruits and vegetables for our members, neighbors and even our Members-in-Residence program participants.

We made it a weekly routine for our campers to learn about social responsibility and what the gardens mean for our community. They had fun getting dirty and taking care of the gardens by watering and picking the fresh fruits and vegetables!

We thank the Valley United Way for including us in this project and we look forward to other community partnerships.





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## THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

The YMCA's Boys and Girls Outdoor Leadership Development program (BOLD & GOLD) has been operating out of Seattle for the last twelve years. In 2016, YMCA Camp Hi-Rock was one of 10 Ys across the country chosen to help expand this incredible program. BOLD & GOLD takes diverse groups of boys and girls ages 11 -18 on one or two-week backpacking adventures to develop their fullest leadership potential as positive, multicultural leaders in their communities. At Camp Hi-Rock, our small groups (eight participants and two to three counselors) travel to some of the most stunning wilderness areas in the Northeast to explore the beauty of nature, face challenges, try new things, and most importantly - be their own unique self. Our participants return from our programs knowing that the confidence, strength and friendships they developed will help them meet any challenge on the trail, in the classroom, or back home in their communities.

Over the last two years, YMCA Camp Hi-Rock has worked with The Wilderness Society, a non-profit organization focused on protecting our natural areas, to increase participation on BOLD & GOLD trips by 50% each year. In addition to the continued growth of participation, Camp Hi-Rock has expanded our programming to include canoe trips and an extended backpacking trip in addition to the standard 5-day backpacking trips. Camp Hi-Rock has always cared deeply about helping campers become more caring, honest, respectful and responsible people. BOLD & GOLD has given Hi-Rock campers, new and old, the chance to further develop these character values in new and challenging ways. Additionally, these trips focus on developing the BOLD & GOLD values of courage, community awareness, and a sense of wonder. We are so excited to see where BOLD & GOLD takes us and are very excited for the whole new group of campers who will have the opportunity to have this unique, fun, and formative experience.



## FLIPPING INTO A BRIGHT FUTURE

Lakewood-Trumbull YMCA Gymnastics Camp is a fun-filled, unique summer experience! For over 20 years, the Y Gymnastics program has been a proud leader in the community, providing recreational and competitive gymnastics programs for all. At gymnastics camp, children participate in activities that foster growth in social-emotional learning. Campers learn gymnastics skills whether they are new to the sport or are experienced and more advanced. Everyone builds confidence when trying new skills. Coaches help instill the value of hard work and encourage campers to always believe in themselves. When asked "What do you love most about gymnastics camp?" a 10 year old responded, "I like trying new tricks." A fellow 4 year old said, "I love learning." Campers also participate in other sports, group games, and STEM activities. These team building activities provide a sense of belonging and provide the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of peers. #BestSummerEver



## MISSION MOMENT

Maci, Darius, Everett, Kyle, and Noah are just a few of the Hamden/North Haven YMCA teens who have graduated from being campers and became Counselors-In-Training (CITs) this past summer. They built their leadership skills and discovered their potential while working with Y staff, campers and families. It's truly something special to see program participants, such as these, blossom into Y Volunteers.



## BUILDING A STRONG LEADERSHIP TEAM

The CCCY would like to welcome the newest additions to our leadership team! Chelsea Kordiak - Stratford Y Executive Director; Darryl Brackeen, Jr. - District Executive Director Hamden/North Haven Y and New Haven YMCA Youth Center; Cheryl Tuturice - Soundview Family Y Executive Director and Meaghan George - CCCY Leadership Development & Human Resources Director. We look forward to a great future together!



Chelsea Kordiak



Darryl Brackeen, Jr.



Cheryl Tuturice



Meaghan George

## RESPECTING THE WATER AND HAVING FUN

Designed for young teens ages 10-15, Fairfield Y Beach Club participants gain skills and confidence while having fun and exploring the great outdoors. This unique summertime option keeps this age group active and engaged. There's never a dull moment, as they swim in the Long Island Sound, and fish, clam, kayak and paddleboard on all of the five beautiful Fairfield beaches.

Led by certified, fun, dedicated and talented aquatic staff, teens feel the excitement of making new friends and learning about the environment and estuaries in their own backyard. Rainy days are spent at the Norwalk Maritime Center or on other aquatic ecological field trips. They stay physically active learning how to safely use kayaks, paddle boards and play beach games like volleyball.



One youth, who is new to the Fairfield community, registered for one week then extended their participation to several weeks because they enjoyed the program, met many new friends and enjoyed the water sports.

The Y is grateful to the Fairfield Police Department who donated radios for our staff to carry at all times - and allowing consistent communications with each other, beach lifeguards and the Police Department when necessary. Working together with our community ensured that not only our teens were having fun but were safe as well!

## HAVE YOU SEEN US IN THE COMMUNITY?



Y Volunteers were campers for a day, experiencing all that magic of YMCA Camp Hi-Rock.



Bridgeport Police & Fire officers squared up with Ralphola Taylor Community Center Y kids for Kickball!



The 2019 Alpha Community Services YMCA Walk To End Homelessness had more participants than ever!



Four CCCYs trained youth triathletes as part of the 2019 Race4Chase program! They swam, biked and ran in honor of Chase Kowalski who was lost at Sandy Hook.