

ymca today



Issue No. 15
Fall 2007

A Publication of
The YMCA of
Metropolitan Chicago
Established 1858



Dear YMCA Friends:

It seems that everywhere we go, we hear Y stories. People have learned to swim at the Y; they've camped with us; they've even met their spouses at our centers. It is said that one in three Chicagoans has memories deeply rooted in the Y and we firmly believe those numbers. It seems that everyone is connected to our family in some way.

A couple of months ago we asked you to email us your stories. What's your connection to the Y? What does it mean to you? We were blown away by what you had to say. When we read your letters and emails, we cried, we cheered, and sometimes we were left speechless. In this issue, you'll read some of what was shared with us. It's evident that we touch and transform lives. The names, places and circumstances are unique, but the underlying message is the same—through the years, you've counted on us and we've always been there for you, whether you've turned to us for financial or emotional support.

We thank the countless donors that allow us to help people throughout the Chicagoland region. In 2006, we awarded a record-setting \$3.2 million in scholarships and financial assistance, up from \$1.9 million in 2005. Every dollar makes a difference. Tag days. Member donations. Local board support. Employee contributions. United Way support. The aggregate impact is palpable.

We also thank our employees and volunteers. Nothing is more important than the work we do face to face with our members, residents or clients. The reason people feel that they belong to a Y family is because of our employees. Simple gestures go a long way—greeting a member by their name, a kind smile, a genuine, "How are you today?" It adds up. It truly matters.

We hope these stories inspire you and make you proud. No matter how you connect to us, as a member, as a resident, as a day or resident camper, as a financial investor, or deserver of our mission-based initiatives, always remember that you belong to our Y family.

Sincerely,

Stephen S. Cole
President and CEO
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago



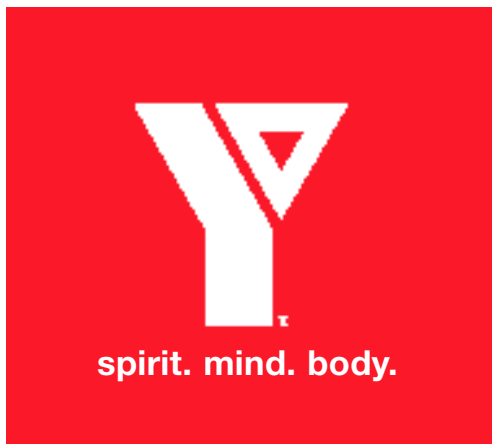
Steve Cole

inside

- Infinite Possibilities
- Overcoming Adversity
- Learning by Example
- One Day at a Time
- A Lifetime of Memories

Mission Statement

The YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago is an inclusive, charitable association, founded on Christian principles and dedicated to building strong kids, strong families and strong communities through programs that develop spirit, mind and body.



Infinite Possibilities

For children, physical handicaps and being different from their peers can make it challenging to get through a day. It's no surprise that a little consistency and finding a supportive environment can go a long way in helping them feel more at ease.

Born 24 weeks premature, five-year olds Joseph and Jonathan Williams were diagnosed with Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), one of the most common causes of visual loss in childhood. Also, Joseph was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and Jonathan with asthma, making him very susceptible to respiratory illnesses.

Despite their physical and medical challenges, the twins are typical boys, full of energy and ready for fun. Their parents, Joseph and Judy, members of the Greater LaGrange YMCA, introduced them to swimming through the Y, but the boys have found more than lessons at their pool.

Joseph can do things in the pool he may not be able to do on dry land. Water reduces the pressure on his joints and bones and allows him to move more freely. Swimming gives Jonathan an opportunity to have cardiovascular and pulmonary benefits without as much strain on his lungs. No one focuses on what they can't accomplish. Their limitations are tiny in comparison to everything they can do and what they will achieve in their lives.

Judy will tell you the boys are happiest when they're in the water, and it's evident. Next time you stop by the pool, look for the boys whose smiles can light up a room. We can't wait to see you on deck, Joseph and Jonathan. Keep up the good work! ■



Joey VanderVen teaches Joseph how to float on his back.

Their parents and members of the Greater LaGrange YMCA, have introduced their boys to swimming through the Y, but the boys have found more than lessons at their pool.



The Y has offered pre- and post-natal care since 1986.

West Side Future provided therapy and educational services as she worked diligently at overcoming her challenges.

Overcoming Adversity

Almost a year ago, Alma Jones made it to the West Side Future office, seeking the Y's Teen Parent Services program. After going through our screening process, we recommended therapy services for Alma but she wasn't ready to take that step.

A few weeks later, she was in crisis and depressed. She was 18, pregnant and already a parent to Adam who was 18 months old. To make matters worse, her family had thrown her out of her house. Absolutely destitute and facing homelessness, Alma turned to us once again. This time she was ready for our help.

We were able to place Alma and Adam in a shelter for women who were pregnant or had recently given birth. She enrolled in our maternal health program that deals with high-risk pregnancies and the first two years of a child's life. West Side Future provided therapy and educational services as Alma worked diligently at overcoming her challenges.

A few months later, she graduated from her high school, the Austin Career Educational Center, and had her sights set on continuing her education, but it would prove to be difficult. She was nearing the end of her term and the shelter wouldn't let her stay indefinitely after her delivery. The money she

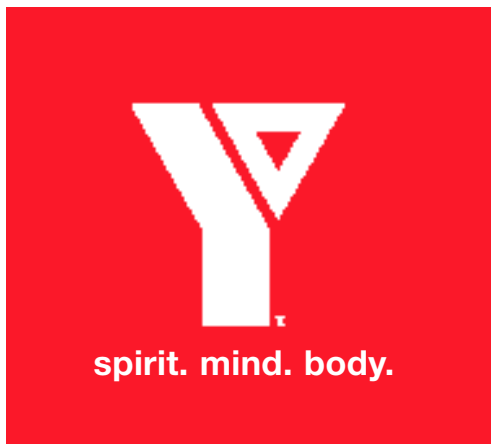
had saved from her job at City Hall could either be used for housing or college but not both. She would have to choose. We knew we were one of her few support systems and Alma would need our help.

The Y found a Chicago Coalition for the Homeless scholarship for which Alma could apply. She gave birth to Joshua in June and was awarded the \$2,000 scholarship just in time to move out of the shelter and into a two bedroom apartment. A local college was so impressed with Alma's determination and inspired by her story that the college agreed to fund her entire school tuition. She no longer had to choose between an education and providing a home for her young family. It's not a choice anyone should have to make.

When you support Y centers and programs, you also support the staff who help people like Alma, Adam and Joshua. Thanks for helping us make a difference. In Alma's case and countless cases, we're the only family they have. ■

Email your Y story to mystory@ymcachgo.org

One in three Chicago-area residents has personally experienced the YMCA, and for many, that experience is truly life-changing. We'd like to read about the memories you hold near and dear.



Learning by Example

A few years ago, Diane Ansah lost her job and was dealing with a divorce. Her daughters, Emma and Sarah, were in the daycare program at Indian Boundary but it was quickly becoming more than she could afford. She wrestled with the need to cancel their family membership to save on expenses, understanding her daughters needed a safe and loving environment. She struggled, but she was too embarrassed to apply for a scholarship.

A year later, her older daughter, Sarah, was getting ready to start kindergarten. The girls had always been together during their daycare program. This would be the first time the girls would be separated. Diane needed to find way to keep them together as much as possible to make the transition easier and found that the Y's kindergarten enrichment and after-school programs were a perfect fit. However, the program was more than she could pay.

Diane knew she had to apply for a scholarship and confides that it was one of the hardest things she had to do. She needed help and was ashamed to admit it. She felt like a failure.

Diane questioned herself constantly until the day of a talent show. Children were supportive of one another, encouraged each

other, and were attentive and respectful during performances. She realized Sarah and Emma were learning by the examples set by their Y teachers. Diane breathed a sigh of relief. Her daughters were learning all the right things, and asking for help hadn't made her less of a person. Her daughters never viewed her that way. In fact, in Sarah and Emma's eyes, she's the best parent in the world.

Editor's note: This year we went to the Indian Boundary Y to shoot photos we could use for our annual report and marketing materials. We stopped by the after-school rooms and there we found the biggest smile in the building. Little did we know that bright smile, now featured on the cover of our annual report, belonged to Emma Ansah. To view the report, please log onto www.ymcachgo.org. ■



Emma can charm with that smile.

She realized Sarah and Emma were learning by the examples set by their Y teachers. Diane breathed a sigh of relief.

The YMCA is one of Chicagoland's largest non-profit and human services organizations, which relies on charitable donations to fulfill its mission.

We thank you for your support.

One Day at a Time

Last June, soon after her 41st birthday, Monica Bofani's life changed in an instant. She was diagnosed with breast cancer, and it seemed as if her entire world had caved in. Despite the hardships associated with her diagnosis, she knew that staying active would be critical to her recovery, and she made a commitment to herself to keep to her routine as closely as she could.



Once a cancer patient; now a cancer survivor.

Following surgery, Monica endured eight rounds of chemotherapy and seven weeks of radiation. Through the countless visits to the doctor and the myriad of tests and treatments, she stuck to her schedule at the Grayslake Y, even participating in a cardio class the day after a chemo session. She was determined to stay strong and focused. Monica firmly believes that exercise helped her get through this traumatic life event.

When the medical bills became a financial burden, Monica was concerned she and her family wouldn't be able to afford their Y membership. We could never allow that to happen. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we were able to extend a scholarship to the entire family.

"This past year has taught me some very valuable lessons: Don't be afraid to ask for help, whether it is emotional, physical or financial," Monica told us. She counted on our support, and we were able to help her when she needed us most. We were there with smiles and encouragement each time she walked through the door. We were there for the tears and the exhaustion. We listened. We hugged. And together, we survived one day at a time.

Monica is cancer free today and hopefully for the rest of her life. ■

She stuck to her schedule at the Grayslake Y, even participating in a cardio class the day after a chemo session. She was determined to stay strong and focused.

A Lifetime of Memories

This November will mark Stuart Greenberg's 10th anniversary at the Leaning Tower Y. That's not so unusual—people like working for the Y. What sets Stuart apart is that he just turned 95 a few months ago.

As Stuart tells it, the Y has been part of his life since he was 11 years old and his leg was crushed in an accident. As part of his lengthy recovery, his uncle enrolled him at the Sears YMCA where he learned to swim and ride a stationary bike as therapy. The Depression didn't make things easy for Stuart but the Y offered a reprieve from those difficulties.

luck began to change. After being honorably discharged from the Army during World War II, he got a sales job with Edward Don and Co., a leading distributor of foodservice equipment and supplies. His first paycheck was \$166. He could hardly believe his eyes. So began a 37-year career that took him to schools, hospitals, restaurants and yes, even Ys.



Stuart Greenberg

Later in his youth, he met a beautiful girl, Dorothy, but it took him seven years to pop the question because he didn't think he could provide for her during those tough times. Soon after they married in 1939, his

After Dorothy passed in 1983, Stuart longed for the camaraderie of a workplace and found it at the Leaning Tower Y. He feels a strong connection to the mission and finds inspiration in the work we do

every day. "My associates are great and the members are among the best people I've ever met," says Stuart. And at 95 years old, we're sure he's met a lot of people! ■

The Depression didn't make things easy for Stuart but the Y was a reprieve from those difficulties.

Wondering How **You** Can Get Involved?

YMCA centers and camps provide the people of Chicagoland with a wealth of opportunities to receive and provide services for others, realize their greatest potential, and enjoy recreation and personal wellness.



The YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago

Volunteer Your Time

Share a Skill

Make a Contribution

Your contribution makes a difference in people's lives...

We serve hundreds of thousands of people every year, regardless of age, race, religion, gender or socio-economic status.

Your contribution is used efficiently...

About 12 percent of the YMCA's budget is spent on administrative costs, allocating roughly 88 percent directly to programs and services.

Your contribution shows that you care...

Your commitment to your community is shown whenever you make a contribution or share your time and skills.

Anything you can do will help our cause — and will be deeply appreciated!

Contact Gil Fonger, Executive Vice President of Financial Development and Marketing, at 312-932-1206 or Gil_Fonger@ymcachgo.org.

YMCA Today is printed on paper containing a minimum of 30% post consumer waste.



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 9454

YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
801 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610
www.ymcachgo.org