

Involvement starts here.

Hi! My name is Shirley Dickson, I've been a member at the Y since my husband and I moved to Owen Sound in 1975. I would like to share my story of what the Y has meant to me and how I've enjoyed it!

The Y was where our children learned to swim, progressing through the "stars", then synchro and eventually, lifeguard. When our grandchildren come for visits, the constant is a daily swim at the Y, followed by basketball in the gym and a vigorous game of foosball in the lobby. When we travel, we visit the Y in other cities.

I signed up for adult swim lessons. I progressed from an indifferent paddler in the SHALLOW END to lengths in the pool. A bunch of us used to swim lengths at noon hour at the old Y, some racking up enough miles to join the 100-Miles Club. It wasn't a solitary activity either. We were sometimes packed in like sardines, 4-6 in each narrow lane. We shared stories. One of my fellow swimmers was a minister and he said he composed his Sunday sermon as he swam. I was content to merely count my lengths – 72 equalled 1 mile.

I was a Y volunteer. I taught regular fitness classes as well as the gentle fit class. One time the national organization did a survey and an observer watched my gentle fit class. Afterwards he asked me what my objectives were for the class. He was surprised when I told him it was both social and physical. Many in the class of older adults lived alone, and this class was probably their only opportunity for social contact that day. So I encouraged them to smile at each other and even do silly things like wriggle their toes at each other. We did a lot of laughing. Maintaining their fitness was a joy.

And now I have come full circle. Both my husband and I are the older adults now. The Y has become more important to us than ever. We're here 3-4 times a week. We do a variety of activities here: weights, walking/running, swimming, Tai Chi, pickle ball, fitness class. As studies emerge about the role of exercise in ameliorating the ailments of senior citizenship - especially dance-like cardio exercise structured to music such as the step class - we are grateful that there's a place we can go that helps us to stay healthy.

I believe healthy lifestyles, involvement and socialization are so important. Everyone should have access to learn new skills, to be involved and to have the joy of coming "full circle" at the YMCA. I donate to the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign to be able to help at least one other person enrich their life at the YMCA.

I invite you to make a donation to the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign. Donations over \$25 will receive an income tax receipt and may be made online, or at the Welcome Desk as a one time donation or as monthly preauthorized donations. Your kindness and generosity will spark a story of its own.

With my sincere thanks,

Shirley

PS: Thank you to all those who have donated in the past and continue to donate today. Your generosity has made an important impact in someone's life.

