

Y Strong Kids Campaign

Kids and families in our community need our help 365 days a year.

It's hard to believe that the New Year is upon us! YMCAs across the country are preparing for the 3rd annual YMCA Strong Kids Campaign. The month long campaign officially kicks off on **February 16th** and runs through **March 16th 2009**.



The YMCA Strong Kids movement keeps growing. In just 3 years we have moved from 27 to 51 participating YMCA associations across the country. Thanks to our donors we're helping hundreds of kids and families gain the values and life skills they need to succeed.

The YMCA Strong Kids program reaches out to children, teens, families, seniors, people of all ages who are unable to afford the full cost of participation in a Y program or activity in our community. Our goal is to raise awareness and much needed financial support to ensure that all can receive the benefits of participating in Y programs. Here are just two stories of how we have helped people in our community:

"I received a call from a woman whose doctor had advised her to become active at the Y before she had some needed surgery. She had multiple health concerns and her husband had just passed away, leaving her some major debts. She was depressed about her financial situation, her health and her life. So we set her up with an assisted membership, at an amount she could afford. The next barrier, however, was transportation. She didn't drive and couldn't afford a taxi and was unable to access public transit due to her health. I assisted her with acquiring transit for the disabled.

She was hesitant about starting a fitness program but before long she was participating and laughing along with the other participants. She would also stay and have coffee with the others, making new friends. Many days she did not need to take the bus as one of her friends would pick her up or drop her off after class. At Christmas that year, she came to see me to thank me, calling me her Christmas Angel. She said that the Y had saved her life! Her fitness level was better and she was walking without a cane. She had made new friends who were helping her through her hard times. And she now has her family involved, bringing her grandchildren to the Y for classes."

Kim Williams – Y Storyteller

"The Smith family, with two children aged 7 and 9, was facing financial challenges and could no longer afford their apartment. One of the children had special needs and was participating in an educational program designed specifically for him so it was important for the family to stay in their community. A trailer on a vacant lot was offered to the family but it did not have hydro, heat or running water. We contacted a local landlord who agreed to a rent the family could afford. The family has moved into their new home and is very excited to have a back yard for the children to play

in! Using the emergency fund, we also assisted the family with groceries to get them started in their new home.

Another recent story involved a young man who found himself homeless, and spent a cold, winter night outside in a park before he found out about the YMCA Housing Support Program. Out of our emergency fund, we quickly provided him with sufficient money for groceries and a one night stay in a motel. The next day we found an apartment for him and negotiated a rent payment plan with the landlord to tide the young man over until he had a job. We also connected him with our Y Employment program so that he could be helped to find a job. Our own staff also came up with linens and a warm winter coat.

Emergency funds were essential in providing the basics to this family and this young man, helping them get back on their feet at a very difficult time. We at the Family Y deal with families in difficult situations all the time. We are committed to ensuring that all families and their children have food, warmth and a roof over their heads. We have described two such situations. There are many others.

Sally Morris and Tanya McKeag - Y Storytellers

The Y Strong Kids Campaign is working quietly behind the scenes, helping to make sure that all families, no matter what their financial situation, can participate and benefit from Y programs and services.

Across our country, in every community, children and families face daily challenges. Here's what we know:

- There are 1.2 million children in Canada living in poverty
- 33% of low income children are in families where the parents work full-time, year-round

Children and families in our community need the Y's help with child care, finding a job, securing housing, and having a place to be active and healthy together and to connect with others in our community. The Y offers programs that provide opportunities, encouragement, positive values and role models in a caring, respectful and enjoyable atmosphere. Instead of focusing on what children and their families don't have, we focus on providing them with the tools they need to succeed in life!

Just one example of how our Y makes a difference is that 14% of our membership or over 400 people, receive financial assistance each year. Donations to the Owen Sound Family YMCA provide healthy family experiences at Y Day Camps, at our Y Health, Fitness & Recreation Centre or one of our nurturing Y child care centres, or through our emergency fund in Y Housing. Please consider supporting your community charity, your YMCA! Kids and families need us 365 days of the year and we can't help them without you! Watch for more information in February or visit www.ymcaowensound.on.ca and click on the Y Strong Kids button.



The Y Connection

January 2009

YMCA Board of Directors

The Owen Sound Family YMCA is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. These volunteers represent many different aspects of our community and their varied backgrounds bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the governing of our Family Y. The Family Y Board meets monthly on the last Tuesday of the month. Each year starting in January, the Nominating Committee recruits new members who will join our Y Board at our annual meeting in June. If you are interested in finding out more about the Y Board of Directors and how you can make a positive contribution to our community, please contact Gayle Graham, Chief Executive Officer, at 376-0484 x204.



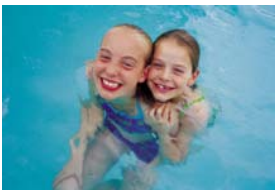
The Y Board of Directors are (L to R): Todd Griffith, Doug Bierer, Mark Cruikshank, Marie Martin, Brian Dean (Vice President), Jason Cranny (Past President), Evelyn Dean (President), John Slocombe, Mark Avery, Bill Ringel. Missing: Tracy Henderson (Vice President), Crystal Osborne.

Subscribe to our Y Newsletter

You can subscribe electronically to our newsletter by going to our Y web site at www.ymcaowensound.on.ca and clicking on the newsletter icon. You will automatically be sent our current newsletter and any future ones as soon as they are posted on the web site. You can also un-subscribe at any time.

A Short History Of The Owen Sound Family Y

Our YMCA was founded 131 years ago in 1877. It occupied a meeting hall and reading room located on 3rd Ave East. In 1899 a Y building was erected on Poulett St, or 2nd Ave East as it is now known. Again in 1906, for \$20,000 a new building was erected on the corner of 3rd Ave East and 10th St. It had a swimming tank in the basement.



In the 1950's it became obvious to the Y Board of Directors that we were again in need of a new facility. The result of their vision is the present health, fitness and recreation centre which cost \$1,000,000 to build and opened in 1967. The health, fitness and recreation facilities of the Family Y have continued to evolve. In the past several years major renovations have resulted in the refurbishment of the majority of our facility.

In 1967 a nursery school was opened and in 1982 a preschool child care begun. Today our Child Care services have grown to include Preschool centres and Before and After school programs located in Owen Sound, Port Elgin, Kincardine, Ripley, Hanover and surrounding communities.



In 1983 our Community & Employment Services began. Today we have employment offices in Owen Sound, Hanover and Walkerton offering innovative community programs throughout the Grey Bruce region.



Over the last 131 years our programs and our delivery of community services have evolved. Nevertheless our values have remained the same.

- A belief in inclusion
- A belief in people's potential
- A belief in being part of the community – both locally and globally
- A belief in the total person – spirit, mind and body
- A belief in the joy and spirit of giving
- And a belief that people can work together to achieve common goals

The goal of meeting the needs of our community drives all our activities. The Owen Sound Family Y is proud to be an active contributor to building strong kids, strong families and a strong community!

The Owen Sound Family Y strives to meet the needs of our community through the provision of Health, Fitness and Recreation; Child Care; and Community & Employment programs. We are a charity striving to build a caring, healthy community by creating opportunities for all people to achieve personal growth in spirit, mind and body. For more information, please visit our web site at www.ymcaowensound.on.ca

Charitable Registration Number 11907 4995 RR0001

Working Towards a New Regional Recreation Facility

For over 130 years, the Owen Sound and Area Family YMCA has been at the heart of creating a healthy, strong and vibrant community. The Family Y is there for individuals and families at every stage of life. Child care programs for preschoolers, leadership programs for youth, and employment and housing support for adults and families are just a few of the many programs the Family Y provides to meet the ever changing needs of our community. As well, the Family Y provides a community hub where people of all ages and backgrounds can connect with others and seize opportunities to improve their health and well-being.

A key component of the Family Y's offerings is a full range of health, fitness, aquatic and recreation programs. Generations of families from Owen Sound and area have come to the YMCA to swim, run and play and to exercise their minds and their bodies.

For several years now, the Family Y has been working with the City of Owen Sound, the Municipality of Meaford, the Township of Georgian Bluffs, the Owen Sound Aquatic Club, the Better Pool Committee and many others in our community to investigate the development a new multi-purpose recreation facility to meet the needs of people in our region. This is a major project and the Y has been working through a twelve step process to ensure its success. In June 2008, the results of a market feasibility study indicated that there is enough interest in membership in a new Family Y facility to financially sustain its operations.

The Family Y, in partnership with the City of Owen Sound, is now undertaking a fundraising campaign study to determine the support in the region to build the multi-purpose recreation facility. The City would own and operate a proposed new arena with one or two ice pads which would replace the aging Coliseum. The Family Y would own and operate the Health Fitness and Recreation Facility which may contain:

- An aquatic centre with a 25m 8 lane swimming pool and a warm water leisure pool with a slide, water play features and a water jet area for therapy
- A fitness/conditioning/wellness centre
- A fully equipped gymnasium
- A walking/running track
- Program rooms for seniors, youth, and child care
- Related support amenities.

This is an amazing opportunity for our region - individuals, businesses and government - to work together to create an exciting new focal point for recreation and healthy living. A new multi-purpose regional recreation facility is about much more than swimming pools, gyms and ice pads. It's about taking care of ourselves, our children, our parents and our community! It will enrich the quality of our lives, those of our children and generations that follow. Watch for more information on our progress in the spring!

New Database

We are currently implementing a new database that will improve our service to members. The database is in use at many Ys across the country and has proven to be an excellent system! Some of the highlights of the new system include:

New membership cards - cards with the member's picture on the card

Faster Access - members will scan their cards quickly and easily on the countertop card reader upon entering the facility – no waiting, just have your card ready! If there is a message for the member, you will hear a special sound.

Faster Program Registration - starting with the spring session, there will be no forms to fill out to sign up for a program. Just stop at the front desk and register immediately into the computer.

Environmentally friendly - fewer forms and less paperwork

Improved information – improved data will assist us in better serving our members

Preparing for a new facility – we continue to work towards a new facility for our community. The new database will provide us with the technology needed to serve a larger number of members.

There is a lot to be done over the next few months! We will be inputting membership information and taking photos to print new membership cards for all 3000 members! As well, we will be inputting all of our registration information for Y programs and camps. So during this transition, there may be times when you have to wait for service. Even by planning ahead, glitches can occur. We ask your patience as we all learn this new system and resolve any problems that may occur. Taking the time now will improve member service in the future!

As of February 1, 2009:

- All continuous monthly membership rates will be updated to our September 2008 fee change. Monthly membership rates are as follows: Lifestyle \$51, Adult \$39, Senior \$36, Student \$30, Teen \$27, Youth \$25 and Preschool \$25. The cost for the towel/locker service is \$12 per month.
- All monthly memberships will be continuous until the member cancels in writing.
- In the past, membership rate changes have occurred on your membership anniversary date. In the future, membership rates will increase on the same specified date for all members and you will be notified in advance.

We look forward to serving you more efficiently and effectively in the future! If you have any questions, please contact Kim Williams, Centre Manager, at 376-0484 x203.