



LIVING OUR CAUSE

Winter 2012, Volume XII, Issue 1

ymcapalms.org



GROWING TOGETHER

Child Care Garden Replanting

Children who attend the YMCA of the Palms Early Childhood Program will soon enjoy a new crop of vegetables thanks to YMCA members and student volunteers from FGCU. Members and staff took a tour of Redi-Plants Corp., who donated all peppers, tomatoes, and onions that were planted in the garden.

Our child care garden is a hands-on learning laboratory for the children in our care, providing them with firsthand knowledge of how plants grow and about insects, the seasons and sun. At the same time, they develop core values when they take on responsibilities such as watering and weeding.

Do you have a green thumb? We're always seeking volunteers to help us with the garden. Please contact Beth Hatch, Director of Child Care Services at 239-597-5437 or bhatch@ymcapalms.org to learn more.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- 230 kids growing and learning each day
- 49% receive financial assistance
- Students enrolled in our VPK program continue to score in the top 25% of all centers in the state of Florida

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



At the YMCA of the Palms, strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility is our cause. Every day, we work side-by-side with community members to address the most pressing needs in Collier County to make sure that everyone—regardless of age, income or background—has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. Our work is not easy, but real and lasting changes can only come about when we work together to invest in our kids, our health and our neighbors and the first step to achieving these improvements is having the full support of our community.

In many places, the Y is known as a place to go swimming or work out, but it's much more than that; it's a place that changes lives. For an example, I encourage you to read the member spotlight of Ashley Lindsey in this newsletter.

The work the Y does through our Early Childhood Program for families like Ashley's demonstrates the intrinsic value of having a Y, and there are many others who could benefit greatly from the different services and programs offered by the YMCA of the Palms. In mid-February, we'll be kicking off our annual community support campaign (you can also read more about our campaign in this newsletter.)

We encourage everyone in the community to join our cause. When we all pitch in and help our neighbors, we make a meaningful, enduring impact in the lives of children and families and ultimately, strengthen our community.

Sincerely, Brandon Dowdy

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT ASHLEY LINDSEY



Being a single Mom at age 22 offers many challenges to YMCA member Ashley Lindsey. But with the Y on her side, Ashley says she has been able to provide a stable, loving environment for her children. The Y was her first choice when seeking child care options for her children, Daqwon, who is now 3, and Aniya, now age 6. Aniya attended VPK at the Y and is now in Kindergarten and Daqwon is currently attending preschool

at the YMCA Gaynor Child Development Center. "I just knew I needed to get them a better education and a place where I know they are loved and safe," said Ashley.

Ashley took a tour of the YMCA's Early Childhood Program and knew instantly that Ms. Beth and her team would be a perfect fit. Additionally, Ashley qualified for the Y's financial assistance program. "Being a young working Mom can be discouraging

sometimes. People can be down on you. I never feel that at the Y. All the teachers are so supportive of me and keep me involved in all aspects of my children's achievements," Ashley added.

When Ashley lost her own mother in July, she was emotionally devastated. Picking up the pieces and moving forward was the only option for her and her children. When Ashley was struggling to find a photo of her Mother, nothing short of fate stepped in to help. Unknowingly, Ms. Donna at the Y handed Ashley a photo taken a few years ago of Ashley and her Mother together at the Y. "She didn't even know I was looking. She just found it and thought I should have it," Ashley said. "She has no idea how much that small gesture meant to me."

It can be the little things in life that matter most. We are proud to provide a nurturing environment for Ashley and her family and the 230 other families enrolled in YMCA's Early Childhood Program. Our financial assistance program helps 113 families and we appreciate all of our members and community donors who give generously to support it.

WE'RE MOBILE FOR YOU

We know you're using your smart phone and tablets more and more every day. Now get the YMCA of the Palms information when you want it, where you want...on the go! Download our new Apple and Android application today and enjoy the following features:

- Search Exercise Classes
- Get Facility Status (Closings)
- Program & Event Updates • GPS Directions

LET'S STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

2012 COMMUNITY SUPPORT CAMPAIGN

We all need the Y. Every day, the YMCA of the Palms serves as a gathering place for the community. Kids pour in every day to play and learn. Seniors meet for coffee and conversation, group activities and to connect with one another. To ensure that the Y can continue to provide Collier County residents with life enhancing services, we're launching our 2012 Community Support Campaign on February 13.

As a leading nonprofit for strengthening community, financial gifts to the Y will help advance programming and services that support youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. More importantly, gifts ensure that the Y is there for those who need us most. By supporting the Community Support Campaign you ensure that everyone – regardless of their circumstances or ability to pay – can benefit from the Y's value-centered programs. Plus, all gifts to the YMCA of the Palms make a direct impact on residents right here in Collier County.

Last year, financial support made it possible for kids to have a safe place to learn and build confidence; families to reconnect and grow together; and people access to health-related education and training to reach their full potential. In total, more than 3,9000 children, individuals and families were able to be part of the Y because of financial assistance raised through our Community Support Campaign.

We all need the Y because our organization works every day to nurture the potential of kids, improve health and well-being and help neighbors support one another. With our Community Support Campaign, we want more people to understand that we are more than where you go to exercise or swim – and that we rely on your financial support to do our vital work.

This year we plan to raise \$283,000.

To learn more about how you can support the Y's cause, please contact Trent Ryan, Director of Financial Services at 239-598-5143 or tryan@ymcapalms.org, or visit ymcapalms.org for more information.

The Y Needs You.



SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT Sukie Honeycutt & Tony Ridgway

Long-time Neapolitans Sukie Honeycutt and her business partner Tony Ridgway are known for their impact on the culinary scene, having just celebrated their 40th anniversary of working together in Naples. What you might not know is Sukie's dedication and commitment to the YMCA of the Palms.

Sukie's involvement with the Y started casually enough – she became a member in the late '80s and was quickly impressed with the welcoming atmosphere and the warmth and camaraderie she experienced between staff and members. She could tell early on that there was something special about the Y, and when staff asked her to get more involved by volunteering on a committee, she easily said yes.

As she became more connected to the Y as a volunteer on other committees and eventually serving as Chairman of the Board of Directors, Sukie learned about the impact the Y has on our community. She says, "Over the years, people have sometimes asked me why I care so much about the Y, because some people view it as just a 'gym and swim.' I tell them it's so much more than that. The Y is an organization that serves our community in so many ways and is here for all people – children, adults, and families."

With the economic challenges over the last few years, Sukie knows that the Y can provide a safe haven for people who might otherwise fall through the cracks in social services. "Because the Y offers financial assistance, working parents know their children have a nurturing environment where they can learn and thrive. Families can spend time together in a healthy place. The Y is truly here for everybody."

Sukie and Tony are Honorary Co-Chairs of our 2012 Sneaker Ball, continuing their long tradition of support for the YMCA of the Palms. The Sneaker Ball is a fun, informal fundraising event that will feature a menu deeply entwined with French and American culinary roots from Ridgway Bar & Grill and delectable treats from Tony's Off Third Bakery. We're so thankful for their commitment and their generosity!



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UPCOMING ACTIVITIES & EVENTS



Youth Swim Lesson Registration Opens January 16

The Y's first session of youth swim lessons in 2012 will start in March and will include both weekday and weekend lessons for children starting at 6 months of age. Register online at ymcapalms.org.



Spring Youth Sports Registration Opens February 10

Register online at ymcapalms.org



Sneaker Ball January 21, 2012

Leave your tuxedo at home and join us for this fun, informal fundraising event where proceeds benefit underprivileged children and families in our community. Tickets on sale now and volunteers are needed. Contact Brian Knox for more information, 239 598 5178.



Splash Week April 2-6

The YMCA's Splash Week water safety program will be held the week of spring break in Collier County. Targeted at both children and parents, the program teaches water safety practices and basic swimming skills along with YMCA core character values - caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. The program is free to any child ages 3-12 in the community. For more details or to register register, please visit ymcapalms.org.



Senior Potlucks January 27 & February 24

All members are welcome! Stop by the Member Service Desk for more details.