



YMCA CENTRE FOR LIFE

COMMUNITY BUILDING CAMPAIGN



NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2022

Strong Kids, Strong Communities

Chances are, when you think of the Y you think of kids, and while the YMCA embraces everyone, regardless of their age, children and youth are undeniably a strong focus for the YMCA of Central East Ontario.

We know that participation in structured recreation not only promotes physical health and wellness but is a key protective factor which can act as a buffer against risk factors many young people face. Evidence-based research shows us that youth who take part in athletic and extra-curricular activities have a greatly reduced incidence of risky behaviours such as substance abuse and poor academic habits.

Mental health improves too - participation in extracurricular and community recreation activities promotes heightened self-esteem, feelings of happiness, and pro-social behaviour. Participation provides an opportunity for children and youth to gain confidence through skill development and the development of caring relationships with peers, coaches, and program staff.

The new YMCA Centre for Life will create an exciting 'kids only' zone which will include a Children's Treehouse – think slides, tunnels and multi-sensory climbing apparatus, and a Kid Fit Zone to challenge older children with a rock-climbing wall, ropes and rings.

The new YMCA Centre for Life will be a wonderland for active kids with energy to burn.

While they explore and expand the limits of their imaginations, they are building physical strength and coordination and learning social skills, which can lead to improved focus, better school performance, and emotional well-being.

Martial arts, gymnastics, cyclefit, aquatics programs, tri-athlete training, dance, science, art programs and more will be on offer. Making exercise fun and age-appropriate can foster a lifelong love of exercise and healthy activity.

The new YMCA Centre for Life will also offer more of its popular youth leadership courses. Held throughout the year or during summer camps, young people can become Junior Fitness Leaders, take a Babysitting or Home Alone Safety course, or join the Youth Leader Corps or more. We all benefit when these young 'Leaders in Training' are encouraged to give their best effort, and we are happy to support and nurture the next generation of change-makers.



Powerful Partnerships

The new YMCA Centre for Life will be unique in this region for its role as a community hub offering a suite of social services all under one roof. While we have always worked in partnership with other agencies, we are moving to formalize these agreements. We are looking forward to providing one-stop shopping for services, more frequent referrals, and greater uptake of programs and services.

We believe the synergies that these partnerships provide will allow each of us to expand our services, to ensure greater access for community members and co-programming opportunities.

We will eliminate redundancies and duplication of services and realize increased operating efficiencies for each partner organization. Meet our four new partners [here](#).



"My son thrives with attending the YMCA and I could not say enough great things about their program, as well as their staff!" - Kylie

Meet Kristin Crowe, YMCA Community Building Campaign Co-Chair

Kristin Crowe is proud to say that the values that guide her personally and professionally so closely align with those of the YMCA that taking a leadership role to bring a new YMCA Centre for Life to the community she so dearly loves is a natural fit.

Strong Kids, Healthy Families, Inclusive Communities

This is the YMCA's vision that so strongly resonates with Kristin.

Kristin's children became involved in recreation at the YMCA, Belleville during their teen years. Her eldest son, a varsity football player, enrolled in a summer membership to maintain his fitness level during the off season. Kristin's youngest son enjoyed the open gym pick-up basketball sessions for both physical activity and social engagement. She has seen first-hand the value of a Y membership and the commitment of the YMCA staff and volunteers to Strong Kids. "I'm so pleased that both of my boys have taken their passion for an active lifestyle into their adult lives."

When asked to reflect on what excites her about the project, she eagerly talks about the new YMCA Centre for Life being at the forefront of positive growth and revitalization in the west end of Belleville, growth that will radiate out into the region. Attracting newcomers and embracing diversity will only strengthen this great community and she is thrilled to be part of this legacy project.

She says she was recently challenged to view the existing facility through an accessibility lens, and it became even clearer to her that the time for this new facility is now. Ensuring the new space is accessible for all is paramount. After all, she says, "this will be more than a YMCA, it really is a Centre for Life and speaks so much to building community."

A natural connector, Kristin enjoys a large network of friends, colleagues, clients, community leaders, and more. She is able to 'lean in' to this network whenever she needs support – personally, professionally or for her community and volunteer endeavours.

Kristin gives so much to this community, as a longstanding Rotarian, and with leadership roles with the Belleville General Hospital Foundation, United Way of Hastings & Prince Edward County, Loyalist College Foundation and others. In turn, she has been recognized with a Belleville Chamber of Commerce Cornerstone Award, as the Children's Foundation Guardian Angel, an Honorable Remarkable Woman of Quinte, and as a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club of Belleville. As a cancer survivor, now in remission, she has also lent her talents to fundraising for the Canadian Cancer Society. All of this as the President and co-owner of Alarm Systems, which is celebrating 50 years in business this year.

A constant thread through her life and work is a commitment to nurturing the

connection between mind, body, and spirit – a central pillar of the YMCA's mission. Through journaling, Kristin is able to see the interconnectedness of people and community, and this resonates with how the new YMCA Centre for Life will bring people together.

We are so thrilled that Kristin has so enthusiastically chosen this project for her boundless energy and talent. As she says, "from the first shovel in the ground to the day we cut the ribbon and open the doors – I'm all in!"



In Her Own Words

"As a mother of a child with special needs, my appreciation for the staff and outstanding work that their dedicated, and inclusive team has provided our family, truly has bettered both mine and my child's life.

It can be difficult to find people and places that are understanding and truly accepting of a child with neurological and developmental disorders. The YMCA has provided him with a safe and welcoming environment to receive the proprioceptive feedback his body needs. From swimming, to playing in the Treehouse, to all the wonderful camp activities, he is always treated with respect and encouraged with positivity. The staff helps push my son to reach new goals while taking his needs and differences in how he communicates, learns, and interacts with others into consideration.

The entire team has helped give my son the experiences he may have otherwise missed out on. Through these experiences he has grown and learned immensely. I thank the entire staff at the YMCA from the bottom of my heart for their kindness and inclusive environment." – Melissa Potts