



YMCA CENTRE FOR LIFE

COMMUNITY BUILDING CAMPAIGN



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“In the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”

So said Abraham Lincoln, and there is no getting around it, seniors are a fast-growing segment of our community, and the YMCA has a suite of activities and programs to add life to their years. Of course, we welcome everyone at the YMCA, but seniors are a vital part of our membership, and the YMCA Centre for Life will create new and innovative ways to provide resources, programs, and connections for everyone, including our aging population.

The YMCA Centre for Life is being planned and designed with the future in mind. Did you know that Statistics Canada reported in 2017 that those over the age of 65 outnumber children under the age of 14. There are more seniors (5.9 million) than children (5.8 million) in Canada. In 2021, 1 in 5 people were over the age of 65, and 1 in 3 over the age of 55.

By 2061, it is projected that there will be 12 million seniors to 8 million children.

At the same time, Statistics Canada reported in 2013 that only 1 in 5 adults, and older adult

Canadians, achieve the recommended 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week, based on the [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines](#). Our response is to create a suite of activities that enable people to improve their lives and become healthier in spirit, mind, and body.

Regular YMCA programming includes gentle aquatic programs, such as “tone and stretch,” “aquafit” and “aqua yoga” and gentle fitness classes geared towards providing low-impact exercise. With the addition of the new Therapy Pool, we will have many more opportunities to provide comfortable therapeutic programs.

We know that active living is a key component of healthy aging, and at the YMCA Centre for Life we will have expanded capacity to provide a community hub where everyone feels welcome and has a sense of belonging and can build their lives on a solid foundation.

Music & Healthy Aging

Surprising things happen when we take our programs outside our four walls and meet people in our community. Take our Drum Fit exercise class as an example.

Music therapy has long been known to be an enormous benefit to those individuals living with dementia, and our partnership with Belmont Long Term Care Facility connects residents with the music of their lives.

With our stability balls and drumsticks in front of them, participants drum along to the beat of their favourite music. As memories are triggered by familiar tunes, residents respond by singing along or moving rhythmically to the beat. It is wonderful to share the progress and enjoyment of the therapeutic sessions.

Although our program is temporarily suspended due to COVID, we are eagerly planning for the day it is safe to return.



Meet Ed Lehtinen, Co-Chair for the YMCA Community Building Campaign

After nearly 50 years of living in Belleville, Ed Lehtinen and his wife Fran have contributed to dozens of charities and community projects which include Belleville Hospital Foundation, where he is a Past President and Director Emeritus, Rotary Club of Belleville where he has been recognized as a Paul Harris Fellow, the Children's Foundation, United Way, Heart & Stroke Foundation, and many, many more.

It is therefore with great delight that we are able to announce that Ed Lehtinen is building on his long-standing support of the YMCA in Belleville, by agreeing to co-chair the campaign to build the new YMCA Centre for Life. Ed chaired the 2019 Strong Kids campaign, which empowers so many young people and families to participate in the many programs, activities, and services available through the YMCA. Ed knows firsthand the value of belonging in the community he calls home. He can be seen in the gym on a regular basis, and he admits that although his own membership card has only been active for the last 10 years or so, his family have been using the YMCA facility for much longer. His now-adult children all lead active lifestyles and his son Eric and daughter-in-law Liz maintain a strong relationship with the YMCA and other community organizations that serve young people.

Ed says the YMCA is "an easy place to go" that welcomes participants at all levels of fitness and experience, and with no sense of competitiveness. He particularly enjoys that everyone is there for a similar purpose and people are serious about feeling better, and that makes it comfortable to join in.

When asked about what excites him most about the new YMCA Centre for Life, Ed said that it is the partner organizations, and all the possibilities that strong relationships will create. The unique and innovative creation of a community hub, where community service agencies will all come together under one roof is important and will be the biggest change for the organization and the community. He believes this is a natural progression, building on the many positive relationships that have helped build and maintain the Belleville community. Ed also believes the YMCA is doing great work with the integrated healthcare programs they have developed with local hospitals and associations, as well as outreach activities to engage seniors and youth. "Anything we can do to encourage people to be less reliant on our provincial healthcare system, through good physical and mental health, is to be encouraged," he says.

The fact that financial means are no barrier for those families or individuals who wish to

participate is also important to Ed. Being able to provide financial assistance in the form of subsidies differentiates the YMCA from other health and wellness facilities and he is pleased that this will remain a core feature in the new YMCA Centre for Life.

Finally, he says that the values of the YMCA network are self-evident in the way that staff and volunteers interact with members and encourage inclusivity and a sense of belonging.

Thank you, Ed, for the many ways you are supporting the campaign to ensure the new YMCA Centre for Life will be a positive touchpoint in the lives of so many.



Since the early 1930s, when many resorts promoted the newly discovered therapeutic powers of their hot springs for polio, arthritis, and other rheumatic and immunologic ailments, pool therapy has been an accepted part of exercise and physical therapy programs. As the name implies, this popular therapy is generally conducted with participants submerged in a warm swimming pool with guidance from trained professionals.

We are excited by the possibilities the new YMCA's Centre for Life therapy pool will offer. Many diseases and health conditions respond well to water-based therapy, including arthritis, a range of cardiovascular conditions, and of course, mental health is positively impacted. Water based exercise can benefit everyone, and the YMCA Centre for Life is pleased to look forward to expanding its aquatics programs in the new facility.