



YMCA CENTRE FOR LIFE

COMMUNITY BUILDING CAMPAIGN



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Members Make the YMCA

The greatest impact of the YMCA shines through the stories of its members and how their lives have changed because of their path to well-being at the Y. In this first of a series of member stories, we talk to YMCA Belleville General Manager Amanda Smith about having a place to go “where everybody knows your name, and they’re always glad you came.”



“When you walk in the door at the Y you’re going to be welcomed. That staff member who greets you is probably going to know your name, know about your children, and where you went on vacation,” says Amanda Smith of the judgment-free space that exudes an ethos of come-as-you-are. “It gets very personal here, but it doesn’t have to be. We’re all working out together with the common goal of overall health. All we need to do is get people in the door. Once they’re in, they love it!”

The issue is getting people to the door at the current location. Nestled in a neighbourhood in Belleville’s east end, it’s not ideal for drive-by or walk-in traffic. All of that is poised to change with the new YMCA Centre for Life that’s slated to stand tall on Bridge Street in Belleville’s booming west end. As the General Manager of the oldest branch in central east Ontario, Amanda is most excited about the new facility’s all-star accessibility.

“I have watched programs initiate here at the Belleville branch and have to move to another branch because we just can’t serve people who need the accessibility,” says Amanda, citing wheelchair basketball as a prime example. As the popular program grew, it could no longer remain at the outdated facility, which lacks accessible features like wide entryways. “

While the current building doesn’t meet today’s accessibility requirements, the new Centre for Life will, in addition to ensuring that accessibility doesn’t pose a challenge to anyone who wishes to participate in programs or services at the YMCA.

While the demographics at the Belleville branch are diverse, the membership is slowly recovering following Covid-19 lockdowns and loss of attendance. More students than usual are bringing a youthful vibe, young families are thriving in the Children’s Treehouse play area, and a solid showing of seniors are filling fitness classes.

The new YMCA Centre for Life will be better able to provide services to individuals with mobility challenges and the hope is that more will seize the opportunity and find their place at the Y. Amanda also wants to increase the number of new Canadians coming to the YMCA by strengthening the organization’s collaborations with Quinte United Immigration Services. And inclusivity is further prioritized with the YMCA offering subsidies to 20% of the membership, be it families, youth, children, or seniors.

“Belleville seems to be a landing place for a lot of people,” says Amanda, who moved from Toronto 17 years ago and first became fitness

manager. “The entire reason I know anybody in this community is because of the Y. I always encourage people who are new to Belleville to join the Y because you are immediately going to feel a part of something and I guarantee you’re going to make new friends. I know, because it happened to me.”

Kai’s Story

“Our family has belonged to the Y for years. I speed skate, swim, power lift and do track and field with the Special Olympics, and training at the YMCA prepares me. I have many friends at the Y and am looking forward to meeting new friends at the new YMCA Centre for Life. “



Belleville Member Kai on the Turf

Spotlight: Campaign Cabinet Member Kelly McKinney



Born and raised in Belleville, volunteer Campaign Cabinet member Kelly McKinney went travelling abroad as soon as he could, finding himself fortunate to work for a company that organized biking and walking tours all over the world. He credits those years for learning to appreciate other cultures and different ways of looking at the world. The current VP of Marketing and partner at McDougall Insurance went to Nicholson Catholic College for high school, Carleton University, and then achieved an MBA at the University of Toronto. We caught up with the father of four, whose kids like sports, travelling and the YMCA as much as he does.

1. What drew you to support the YMCA's Centre for Life capital campaign?

I have been a member of the YMCA for as long as I can remember. I also worked at the Y as a lifeguard in high school. My wife and I brought our kids along when they were ready. It's really been a life-long attachment. I think it's a great place – inclusive, fun, and friendly.

2. What passion or interests and skills do you bring to the Cabinet?

I love all sports. I try to work out, cycle, swim, wind surf, etc. I am high energy. Hopefully I bring that energy to the Cabinet. I also like to get things done.

3. Why are you motivated to volunteer?

The Y is great! I would like to make it better.

4. In your opinion, what is the most important work that YMCA Belleville does?

I think it's inclusion. There is a place for everybody at the Y – new people to Belleville, immigrants, students studying here, everyone. It doesn't matter what your background is, the Y is a friendly environment.

5. What excites you about the dream for the YMCA's Centre for Life becoming a reality?

The current YMCA opened its doors in 1964 and has served the community well, but it is outdated. I am jealous of the John Williams YMCA. We need a bright, clean space that reflects the energy of the people playing at the Y here.

6. What other organizations or causes do you support?

I have been a member of the Rotary Club for 18 years, a board member for 9 of those years, and President. I like it especially because 100% of the money donated goes to the cause. The administration is paid for by the members. If you donate, the money goes to kids, water, sanitation, HIV/AIDS, you name it, but it doesn't go to fundraising, or insurance or administration. That feels good. I also sit on the board of Community Living Prince Edward.

7. Do you have a favourite phrase or quote?

"How you climb a mountain is more important than reaching the top." — Yvon Chouinard, Let My People Go Surfing



Extending the spirit of giving year-round.

Our Supporting Team

We are grateful to our **Community Building Campaign** Cabinet members for their passion to the YMCA Centre for Life:

Wolf & Elaine Tausendfreund,
Campaign Honourary Chairs

Kristin Crowe, Co-Chair

Ed Lehtinen, Co-Chair

Ruth Ferguson Aulhouse

Cassandra Bonn

Bruce Mackay

John Mastorakos

Kelly McKinney

Sue O'Brien

Bernie Ouellet

Doug Peterson

Mark Phillips

Boyd Sullivan

Heather Williams



Those pictured in the photo are: Front Row: L-R Heather Williams, Ed Lehtinen (Campaign Co-Chair), Kristin Crowe (Campaign Co-Chair), Dave Allen (YMCA of Central East Ontario President & CEO) Back Row: L-R Sue O'Brien, Mark Phillips, Doug Peterson, John Mastorakos, Bruce Mackay, Cassandra Bonn
Absent from the photo: Ruth Ferguson-Aulhouse, Kelly McKinney, Bernie Ouellet, Boyd Sullivan, Wolf Tausendfreund



The YMCA of Central East Ontario is building a new YMCA Centre for Life in Belleville. It will be an inclusive space for people of all abilities, socio-economic status, ethnic and sexual orientation, while providing more community services closer to home in a safe and welcoming environment.

To learn more about how you can get involved, contact us at campaign@ceo.ymca.ca.

250 Sidney Street, Belleville, ON K8P 3Z3

campaign@ceo.ymca.ca

(343) 362-9622 ext. 225

campaign.ymcaofceo.ca