



YMCA CENTRE FOR LIFE

COMMUNITY BUILDING CAMPAIGN



NEWSLETTER MAY 2023

The architects for the new Centre for Life have a design in their hands aligning well with the original vision and intent for the burgeoning facility that's poised to build a sense of belonging in Belleville.



Project Update

Local designers and construction managers Taskforce Engineering alongside YMCA CEO Dave Allen, Senior Manager Ron Riddell and Dave Brown, YMCA Project Consultant, are intent on meeting the goal for "shovels in the ground" this fall. Their focus has been on the flow of navigating what the building has to offer, among logistics like where on the Bridge St. property the building will sit and how the facility will share parking space with the curling club.

"We are in the early design stages, working with the architects based on a set of criteria for space allocation and a matrix of the different needs within the building, making sure it's inclusive and integrated," says Hilary Murphy, Director of Engineering and Business Development, who has previously worked on the Quinte West YMCA. She says the Centre for Life design is more complex in that it is accommodating partner organizations

committed to achieving synergies with the Y and community engagement for generations to come.

"We want to ensure the main lobby and the partners are front and centre and where people gather. We don't just want to pick up what we currently do and just do it someplace else," says Dave Allen. "We want to look at our program models and how we can work together with the partners to create some new and exciting programs that will be inclusive to more people and impact more people. At the end of the day, a building is just a building. The magic takes place with the people and programs."

The construction landscape has changed significantly since the project application was originally submitted in 2019. Costs are 30 per cent higher, but Taskforce has the experience to find an efficient design that works with the budget. "We have a very good understanding of market conditions because we're working with contractors day in and day out," says Hilary.

"It's an advantage in the way the Y has gone about the RFP, giving them flexibility to adjust things to save time and money in the end."

The new Centre for Life is truly a local project, working with Taskforce who's engaging local subtrades where possible. "To really keep the dollars in our community is full circle for everybody," says Hilary. "These are people reinvesting in these types of facilities and programs in our community. We just need to keep our foot on the gas and meet our timelines so the community can start enjoying it."

The project is also green-minded. The very location lends itself to green initiatives, green transportation and pedestrian access. It's close to residential areas including a new neighbourhood and a bike path along Bridge St. connecting to pathways leading to the building. "There's a real opportunity to educate our community on all that the YMCA and partner organizations have to offer," says Dave. "When you walk into the Centre for Life, you'll have a menu of options available to you."

My Y Story: Maria Watts, Member

Maria Watts is a retired teacher from Brampton and a recent member at the Belleville Y. During the pandemic, Maria looked after her 6-year-old grandson, helping him with online schoolwork using Zoom. One of the main reasons Maria attends the Y is for the in-person connections. In just over a year as a member, the 75-year-old's health has turned around from using a walker full-time to walking freely, using a cane only if needed on longer walks.

It was a chance meeting with a YMCA staff member in the local hardware store that led to Maria checking out the facility and programs. That very day she became a member. She also signed up on the spot to become a monthly donor,

knowing it will help others access the Y, which offers so much more than fitness classes, she says. Maria values the Y's sense of community. She especially appreciates it when she misses a day and staff and members "check in" to ask if she's OK. A regular participant in Gentlefit, Dancefit, chair yoga, meditation and aqua fitness, Maria is only this dedicated to her church and family. She enthusiastically plans on being at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Centre for Life!



Maria with Amanda Smith

Spotlight: Cabinet Member Sue O'Brien

Longtime community volunteer Sue O'Brien is well-known for volunteering for various causes including the hospital board, mental health board, and fundraising for political parties. With a gift for talking to people, she builds community connections and raises the awareness needed to accomplish big time fundraising goals.

"I joined the Campaign Cabinet because I'm what you call a Y rat – or brat!" laughs Sue O'Brien, who started going to gym and swim with her sister when they were 8 and 6 years old. They grew up at the Y, becoming junior and senior leaders and then paid instructors. "That was my whole childhood. My sister and I were on the swim team and out of a tiny 9 by 12 pool we'd go to provincial meets and win."



Sue O'Brien

Along with forging friendships at the Y that would last a lifetime, the sisters happened to meet long distance swimmer Marilyn Bell, famous for being the first person to swim across Lake Ontario. Sue's children have also grown up at the Y, and Sue has served a few terms on the board. When the Belleville YMCA asked Sue to join the Community Building Campaign, it was a clear yes.

"When they talked about inclusion, I thought, 'how dignified is that?' A place where everyone is included. This isn't a hard sell. What will motivate people to provide an investment in the project is how accessible the Centre for Life will be," says Sue, who is a retired psychiatric nurse in the school system and former marathon runner.

"The new Y is not just a building with basketball – it's a life centre! When you have everyone going through the door, whether in a wheelchair, or a high functioning Down Syndrome child, or someone who's 35 years old going to learn something new, that's amazing. It just makes sense to meet everyone's needs. We can't afford to isolate anyone anymore."

Serving community has deep roots for Sue. Her grandfather came from Italy, started a fruit stand and made his way up to building the Kinsmen Community Outdoor Pool that's still here today. "If you can help, then do it. That's what we're supposed to do, isn't it? Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you?" says Sue. "Never underestimate the power of commitment and community. You never know what happens."

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.

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