



## YMCA CENTRE FOR LIFE

# COMMUNITY BUILDING CAMPAIGN



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September signals the time of year to get back to routine, whether it's the swing of school and work, or a fitness and healthcare routine. The YMCA serves our whole community, from young children to people recovering from illness or injury, to support and resources for seniors. In this issue of our campaign newsletter, we highlight the role the YMCA Belleville Branch plays in the continuum of healthcare from prevention to post-rehabilitation for all ages. After all, our single purpose is to improve the health and well-being of individuals in spirit, mind and body.



## Keeping a Pulse on Healthcare at the Y

For more than 15 years, the Belleville YMCA has been offering healthcare programs for a wide variety of ages and backgrounds. Whether it's preventative or recovery from a physical injury or disease, the healthcare programs at the Y are meeting the community's needs from every angle. Growing in demand and offered in partnership with healthcare organizations, the programs are well crafted to help people maintain healthy lifestyles, prevent illness, and improve overall well-being.

Post-Rehab Maintenance is a popular program that started in 2007 when it was called Cardiac Maintenance. It attracted a wide range of overflow patients from Hôtel Dieu Hospital in Kingston. The program includes cardiovascular, strength, balance and flexibility exercises and a guided meditation for improved quality of life that is designed for those who have experienced a cardiac event, stroke, or have been diagnosed with high risk factors for heart disease, metabolic disorders, or chronic lung disease. There was such demand for the service that the hospital reached out to different organizations in the community to help, and the Belleville Y stepped up, donating the space and staff to support the program as needed.

"It's more about mission than margin," says Amanda Smith, General Manager of the Belleville YMCA. Participants are referred to the program by Hôtel Dieu Hospital, Belleville General Hospital or a cardiologist or family physician. "It's a very specialized program. Just

having it at the Y means it's accessible to more people and that's truly why we do it."

Prescription to Health is another popular program, which aims to tackle the growing problem of sedentary lifestyles and to prevent future illnesses by addressing common barriers of motivation and access. The program is a partnership between the YMCA of CEO, Queen's University Health Centre, Belleville Nurse Practitioners, and Belleville and Quinte West Health Centre. Quinte patients affiliated with partnering agencies can receive a prescription from their healthcare professional that can be taken to the YMCA for a complimentary 60-day gym membership.

Another in-demand program is The Alzheimer Society's Minds in Motion, currently running on Tuesdays at the Belleville Y for two hours, which entails physical exercises led by YMCA staff and education and cognitive games led by Alzheimer Society staff. The YMCA also provides space for the Stroke Survivor program, which offers low-impact exercises led by the Victorian Order of Nurses for one hour on Wednesdays to help participants with their balance in the pool and on dryland. Most come with little experience in the pool but end up loving time in the water and being able to move freely.

When the new Centre for Life opens, the potential for increased participation and outreach to healthcare professionals to fill the programs will grow substantially. "We can

only do so much within our own four walls," says Amanda. "What we've really learned these past few years is partnership, partnership, partnership! To stay relevant in the community and continue to grow, we need to partner with other organizations. We can't be reinventing the wheel if there's a program that is already working well and has a quality name backing it like the VON or the Alzheimer Society and we can collaborate with them."

An added feature to the healthcare programs is that spouses, partners or support workers are invited to attend for free. Oftentimes, people don't feel comfortable attending a program on their own. Time and again, as General Manager and fitness instructor, Amanda has seen how the social element helps people commit to classes. Studies show that participating in fitness classes not only help improve physical health, but also benefits mental and emotional well-being. Socializing with others while doing physical activity helps people stay motivated and accountable while exercising. It's proven the YMCA ethos "casual to connected to committed." Once people make a connection and feel the sense of community at the Y, they become committed.

"I truly believe all we need to do is get people through our doors and they become connected," says Amanda. "I just think we're social creatures. The social aspect can support people in reaching their health goals. Why do it alone, when we can do it together?"

# My Y Story

Dwain participates in the VON Stroke Survivor Program, which he says has helped him maintain his independence.

"The people at the YMCA are very helpful with the program. The VON partnership with the Y benefits the community, allowing us to use the equipment and the help of the staff, who are always so nice and friendly right from the manager to the floor staff. I think it's nice that the YMCA and other agencies will all be included in one building. It's one trip to get to all those services."



Dwain with YMCA Staff Sandy (left) & Peter (right)

## Captured in Conversation: Talking About the Minds in Motion Healthcare Program

"If we didn't have a fitness instructor and the space provided by the YMCA, we at the Alzheimer Society wouldn't be able to run this program."

"I think it's good that they have come in because it becomes an inclusive thing that the Y is really supposed to be about. It's great; the more that we can do stuff like that is fantastic."

"I'm a volunteer and I quite enjoy it. I like the space here. And I don't mind the exercise. I never was an exercise person but now later in life I have to be."

"I'm really excited for the [new Centre for Life] accessible space. It means we can change the prerequisite requirements in the assessment process for joining Minds in Motion because right

now the requirement is to independently ascend and descend a full flight of stairs. We want to be able to provide this program for people with mobility issues because a lot of the exercises that we do are accessible to people who are in wheelchairs."

"I think that it's important for all different age groups to mingle socially. When we come to a facility like the Y we're seeing adults and younger folks coming in to work out. There are chances for interaction and I think that it's really important for the younger age groups to see seniors coming in exercising and being active and socializing. I think that's part of the community building of Minds in Motion working with other agencies to create that."



Minds in Motion Program Participants

## Did You Know



**23**

full-day and before/after school childcare locations spanning Quinte West to Tyendinaga, PEC to Lakefield



**615**

registrants for September 2023; age infant to 12 years old



**159**

of those are full-day registrants, age infant to 4 years old



**1989**

First school-age childcare was offered in 1989 at Queen Victoria Public School in Belleville



**5**

members on the childcare leadership team



**78**

educators across all locations



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](mailto:campaign@ceo.ymca.ca).