



YMCA CENTRE FOR LIFE

COMMUNITY BUILDING CAMPAIGN



NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2023

In the spirit of gratitude, we express our heartfelt appreciation for the invaluable contributions of our volunteers. They are the lifeblood of our organization and have a profound impact on our mission and the lives of countless individuals and families within our community. We wish everyone a Thanksgiving bountiful with reasons to be grateful.



Celebrating the Heart of Our YMCA

The Belleville YMCA is a vibrant tapestry woven together by the dedication and passion of our volunteers. They invest their time and energy, often behind the scenes, to ensure that the Y remains a place of growth, wellness, and support for all. From supporting seniors, to mentoring young minds, and leading our Community Building Campaign, their contributions are diverse and far-reaching.

“Volunteers at the YMCA embody the core values that drive our organization – caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility,” says Dave Allen, President & CEO of YMCA of Central East Ontario. “Their acts of kindness and service have a ripple effect throughout our community. By volunteering their time and skills, they strengthen the bonds that hold our community together, creating a sense of belonging for all

who walk through our doors.” It’s often said that gratitude is the memory of the heart, and volunteers are the heart of our YMCA family. Their tireless efforts have transformed lives, created lifelong friendships, and built a sense of unity that extends far beyond the walls of the Y. Their impact shapes the future of our YMCA at the new Centre for Life, where we will expand our volunteer base and opportunities in collaboration with our community partners: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hastings & Prince Edward Counties, Community Learning Alternatives, Quinte Vitality and Social Support, and Volunteers + Information Centre of Hastings & Prince Edward Counties.

“We extend our deepest thanks to our volunteers for their unwavering dedication,” says Dave. “Their generosity and commitment

are the driving force behind our mission to empower individuals, strengthen families, and build a healthier community. We look forward to the incredible journey ahead.”



CEO Dave Allen and the volunteer Campaign Cabinet for the Community Building Campaign



Heather Williams, third from left, is one of the volunteer Campaign Cabinet Members for the Belleville YMCA Community Building Campaign. Her husband, John Williams, was the Mayor of Trenton and was recognized for his many contributions to community betterment with the naming of the YMCA John Williams Branch in Trenton in his honour.

From Left to Right: Heather’s son Ryan Williams, MP, niece Amanda, Heather Williams, granddaughter Zooe, mother-in-law Audrey, great niece Myla, sister-in-law Cathy, grandson Jack, brother-in-law Gary, grandson Patrick.

Did You Know



225
volunteers



3639
hours volunteers annually



9
types of volunteer roles

My Y Story

The YMCA has had a huge impact on successful Belleville businesswoman Stephanie Rayton's life. It all started when a complimentary Y membership was handed out to youth at the shelter she was living at in Toronto. Later, the Y supported her as a single mother of three and offered a job that led to a career. Now the Vice Chair of the Board for YMCA of Central East Ontario and owner of two businesses, Stephanie has much gratitude for the impact that the Y has had on her and her family. This is her story.

When I was a teenager, I was homeless and living in the shelter system. One of the feelings I had when I was homeless was that I was always in the way. We were hanging outside of stores because you're not allowed to be in the shelter during the day. And you were always treated like you didn't belong there. Complimentary Y passes were given out to all of us. Even though I was feeling ashamed, insecure and alone in my life, when I walked into the Y to hang out at the health and fitness center and play basketball, I was treated the same as everyone else. It started to become a safe place for me.

Years later, I left a very dangerous relationship with three girls under the age of four. I started cleaning houses to provide for them. Then I was connected to the youth entrepreneurship program at the YMCA of Simcoe-Muskoka. I

started to view myself as not a cleaning lady but a businesswoman, and that's where things really started to change for me.

I was also able to access subsidized Y memberships for my children, so even though I was on Ontario Works and was accessing the food bank, the girls were still able to take swimming lessons and participate in recreational activities that I wouldn't have been able to give them on my own. Then the Y became a safe place for all of us.

After completing the youth entrepreneurship program, one of the workers reached out and said, "Hey, Stephanie, there's a job that we think you should consider." And it was running the youth entrepreneurship program! I thought, "This is everything I could ever want." It's using my experiences to help other high-risk youth. It's community driven, and it ignites my passion for business.

But then I looked at the job description and thought there's no way I can get a job like that. I don't have a university education. I was a high school dropout. I had to get my diploma from an alternative school. I started to feel insecure. But it was through the contacts I had at the Y believing in me that I could do this job, that I went ahead and applied. Upon being the successful candidate, I was given opportunities to get out and speak and move up within the Y, travelling around to

different associations. And everywhere I went it was that same welcoming vibe when I first walked through the door at the Y.

I then had the opportunity to move to Belleville. I wanted a fresh start and for the girls to plant roots and have a community. Leaving my job was so hard; they became like my family. I was exploring our new community with the girls and walked into the Belleville YMCA and introduced myself at the front desk. All of a sudden Dave Allen came out of his office and shook my hand. And he was like, "What do you need? Do you need a job? Do you want to work here?" I said, "I actually think I'm going to start my own business, but thank you." That just really established that sense of belonging for me again. It didn't matter that I had never been to the Belleville Y before. I was part of the Y family and if I needed anything, that's where I could go.

Stephanie launched her cleaning business Mommy Mops to hire mothers to work during the hours that their kids are in school and daycare. Her business has expanded into Mops Inc., a janitorial service with locations in Belleville and Picton. Having worked at the Y and seeing how values are put first in every decision has influenced her business in putting people first as a living-wage employer helping her team connect to resources within the community should they ever need the support. Now her businesses are offering subsidized Y memberships to staff.

"I believe that the return on investment is so high. All of those people who made it possible for me to access those services have created a ripple effect. Now I can give back to my large team and can affect their families. I'm dedicated to the Y and proud to still be a part of the organization." Stephanie and her daughters are looking forward to the new Center for Life that will be built in their neighborhood within walking distance. "I think for this area of town especially, it's going to be exciting. I'm just so excited to see so many supportive resources all in one place that people can access and experience within our community."



Stephanie with her three daughters