



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**CENTRAL CONNECTICUT COAST YMCA PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER**

[cccymca.org](http://cccymca.org)

**FALL 2013**

## **REDUCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**

Defined as living in a place not meant for human habitation, that is not safe, or in an emergency shelter for one year or on four occasions in the past three years, chronic homelessness is a very serious problem in America. Contrary to the image held by many of the *homeless* person, most facing this terrible condition are employed and are contributing members of our society. Often times a reduction in household income, a serious illness, or even the loss of transportation is all that is needed to lose a home.



David Stevenson  
President & CEO

For many years, our YMCA has worked tirelessly to continually reduce chronic homelessness in the communities we serve. Through the courageous work of the volunteers and staff at our Alpha Community Services YMCA Branch, chronic homelessness is actually on the *decline* in Bridgeport. Several factors have led to this outstanding achievement including excellent leadership from our Boards and staff, teamwork with government and other partners committed to this goal, and support from private and public sources including the generous donors to the Y's Strong Kids Campaign!

So how is the Y making an impact? Once funding is secured, we take a two-pronged approach including the development of housing stock complimented by the excellent social service support provided by our team of twenty professionals at our Alpha Y. Currently we serve the residents of 541 apartments in 28 buildings. In addition to the adults affected by homelessness, the Y will serve more than 400 children living in one of our emergency shelters, transitional apartments or permanent apartments. Most of these children are also enrolled in the Y's child care, summer day camp, or swimming lesson programs.



Harrison Apartments, 651 State Street  
(Bridgeport YMCA, Opened in 1929)

Thank you to all of our generous donors and volunteers who make the work of the Y possible. You're making a huge difference in the lives of many children and their families, and we couldn't do it without you.

Best wishes to all for a happy and healthy fall season!



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#### BRANCH LOCATIONS

**Alpha Community Services YMCA**  
Bridgeport CT  
**Bridgeport YMCA**  
**Fairfield YMCA**  
**Hamden/North Haven YMCA**  
**Lakewood-Trumbull YMCA**  
**New Haven YMCA Youth Center**  
**Ralphola Taylor Community Center YMCA**  
Bridgeport CT  
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**Stratford YMCA Valley YMCA**  
Ansonia CT  
**Woodruff Family YMCA**  
Milford CT  
**YMCA Camp Hi-Rock**  
Mt. Washington MA  
**Association Office**  
New Haven CT

#### OUR MISSION

To put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

## A SAFE AND FUN SUMMER

Every year, our Y branches prepare themselves for a wonderful summer of fun through the magic of camp. We educate our staff about the Y's history and mission, how to be safe at camp and how to engage campers through fun songs, games and activities.

Each day our staff strives to develop the character of our young campers in a fun and nurturing environment. Our goal is to provide a positive camp experience by enabling each camper and staff member to learn, grow and laugh in a safe and accepting atmosphere. Camp provides a level playing field where all kids are treated equally, no matter their socio-economic status.

While end of summer surveys help us to assess the overall camp experience, most often the feedback is from a parent's point of view. While staff see the kids' smiles and hear their laughter every day, the impact we may have on a young life doesn't always sink in until you hear it directly from a child.

Once such "a-ha" moment occurred at our New Haven Y Youth Center. One of our summer program participants is a 10-year old girl who comes to us through a referral from the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Despite the many obstacles she has encountered in her life, she maintains a positive outlook in all that she does. This summer, she took a moment to talk to one of her counselors at camp and said, "The YMCA makes me happy. Do you know that there are so many children that don't have the opportunity to come to camp? When I grow up I am going to make sure that some of the kids like me get a chance to experience all the things that I get to do at the Y." Her counselor carried that experience with him throughout the rest of his day and before he left that night, stopped with tears in his eyes to tell his Camp Director about his conversation. He looked at his director and with a big smile said, "We really do make a difference in these kids' lives, don't we?"

Y camp allows kids to unplug from technology and plug into childhood. In this natural environment, kids discover their truest selves and return home more confident and self-assured, whether they are with us each day at day camp or they stay overnight at resident camp.

Thank you for making extraordinary camping experiences possible for the youth who need them most through your contribution to the Strong Kids Campaign: <http://www.cccymca.org/make-a-difference/give/>

# STRONG KIDS

A YMCA Initiative

## HEALTHY KID'S DAY GOT A JUMP ON SUMMER



Thousands of kids and their families gathered at all the branches of the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA to get a jump on summer and celebrate Healthy Kids Day in late April. Healthy Kids Day is a national Y initiative aimed to educate families about the importance of physical activity and healthy eating. This year, we continued the momentum with local partners and organizations to educate and motivate parents and children to stay physically and intellectually active all summer long, in an effort to address the growing trend of summer learning loss and weight gain.

## SPLASH TO KEEP KIDS SAFE



Something as simple as learning to be safe around the water can make a difference in a child's life especially since so much time in the Connecticut towns we serve is spent outdoors around pools, lakes and the ocean. In June, the Central Connecticut Coast Y Branches taught water safety to over 1,923 children.

## CAMP SIDE Y STORIES



Everyone who walks into the Y has a story to tell about how the Y has made a difference in their lives. One of our summer campers told us, "This was the best day of my life!" Imagine the story they have to share when they come back from a field trip, finally hit the archery bull's eye or get to dress up like a pirate. Over 5,000 kids attended one of our ten CCC Y camps. They all have Y stories to tell, along with some new friends, great memories and skills they'll use for a lifetime.

## BRIDGEPORT Y READING PROGRAMS GAIN THE ATTENTION OF CT OFFICIALS

During the school year preschoolers at the Bridgeport Y Kolbe Center listened to stories read to them by Trumbull students participating in a program called, "Readers Are Leaders." Recently, Congressman Jim Himes (D-4) and First Selectman Timothy Herbst visited the center to congratulate students, parents and teachers for their efforts in connecting two communities, building leadership and encouraging kids to read. The Kolbe students admire the older readers who influence them to choose books and learn to read.



This summer, Connecticut Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch and former NBA Player John Starks visited Bridgeport Y campers and staff as part of the "Read to Achieve" program. Each guest read to the group then invited campers to take turns reading aloud. All the excited, high-energy campers paused to pay attention, follow along and join the fun.



"Research has shown that children who read during the summer have improved academic performance," Wyman said in a release.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOARD



**Althea Marshall Brooks** was appointed to the position of Community Services Administrator for the City of New Haven in 2012 where she oversees city departments and efforts including Health, Elderly Services, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Child Development, Youth Services, Substance Abuse, Homelessness Services, State-Administered General Assistance (SAGA), and Reentry.



**Mario Coppola** is an attorney with Bercham, Moses & Devlin practicing in the areas of municipal law, land use and zoning, property tax assessment appeals, real estate transactions and general civil litigation. Mr. Coppola has been the Trumbull Town Attorney since 2009 and the Westport Assistant Town Attorney since 2006. He has served as President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Greater New Haven Columbus Day Committee and serves on the Walter Camp Football Foundation's Board of Governors.



**Dr. Mario Garcia** is the Director of Public Health for the City of New Haven. He also served as a Public Health Services Manager in the Connecticut State Dept. of Public Health. He was Country Manager (Belize, Nicaragua, Brasil) and Medical Coordinator (Bosnia) with MSF from 1989 to 1995. Dr. Garcia serves on the Y's Diabetes Prevention Advisory Board and is also serving as the Community Coach for the Y's Sam's Club Healthier Communities Initiative.



**William Jennings** is the President & Chief Executive Officer of Bridgeport Hospital and Executive Vice President of Yale New Haven Health System. Prior to his work in Bridgeport he served as the President & CEO of SSM St. Mary's Health Center and President of the SSM St. Louis Heart Institute. He is a longtime friend and supporter of the YMCA.



**Blanca Kazmierczak** is a Vice President, Customer Service Manager at People's United Bank in Bridgeport. She has been with the Bank since 1997. Prior to joining the CCC Y Board of Directors, Ms. Kazmierczak served on the Bridgeport Y branch Board of Managers, most recently as the Board Chair. She was recently recognized with a 2013 Fairfield County 40 Under 40 Award.