



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT COAST YMCA

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

HOLIDAYS 2012

## CLOSING THE EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Through our Real-Time Strategic Planning process, we have identified the *education achievement gap* as a challenge where the Y can make a significant positive impact in the lives of many kids and families. Defined as the difference in academic performance between low-income kids and their more privileged peers, the education achievement gap begins early in life for many children. Here are some of the sobering statistics:

- Many children who have not been introduced to language (being spoken to, read to, through song, etc.) can fall so far behind by the age of *three* that they will never catch up.
- Kids who do not come to school ready to learn (have had a good meal, are rested, are in good health) or who miss school regularly will fall behind.
- Kids who do not participate in educationally stimulating activities during the summer months will enter school in the fall having lost much of what they learned the previous year. We call this *summer learning loss*.



David Stevenson, Ph.D.  
President & CEO

In fact, research tells us that kids who are not reading on grade by *eight* years of age will probably not graduate from high school and will struggle through life. Shockingly, Connecticut has one of the widest education achievement gaps in the U.S.

So what can the Y do to prevent kids from falling into the gap? First, we must focus our resources on kids from low-income families and communities where the gap is the widest. Second, we need to start early in a child's life. Third, we must work in partnership with parents, schools, government and other agencies in closing the gap. Finally, we need to develop new resources to expand our reach to all children in need.

In 2012, our Y has served 754 low income children through the Y's 3 school-readiness programs, 38 after-school programs, and 10 summer camp programs. Disadvantaged children are being introduced to language at an early age, are enjoying healthy meals, are receiving academic support, and are having a blast during the summer while keeping their minds engaged. I'd like to thank our terrific volunteers, staff, partners, and donors who are making such a great difference in the lives of so many kids and families.

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



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#### OUR MISSION

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

## FLYING HIGH AT THE Y

At the Lakewood-Trumbull YMCA, gymnastics is a staple program for its facility and community members with over 500 participants receiving an experience in our preschool, school-aged, competitive team, Parkour, and special needs programs. One such participant received an incredible experience flipping and twisting last spring; this participant also received a gift from the Y in the form of financial assistance.

Sebastian, now 8 years old and in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, learned to cartwheel, roll, swing, and vault in a Boys Level I Advanced class with Coach Andrew. Sebastian showed up every Wednesday at 5:25 pm for an hour to stretch, learn forward and backward rolls, bounce safely on the trampoline and TumbleTrak, and dismount on rings and the pommel horse. "I love everything about gymnastics... everything! I loved when Coach Andrew showed us his front and back flips on the trampoline."

Coach Andrew Campbell, Lakewood-Trumbull Y Youth and Sports Director, remembered Sebastian and that class. "Sebastian is a boy who was enthusiastic about what he was doing and very appreciative for his chance to do gymnastics. I always encourage my gymnasts to thank their parents at the end of class, and I know Sebastian often did. He was very good with the other boys in class, and showed leadership at his age."

Sebastian's father was happy to bring him to gymnastics, often bringing his younger brother to watch, because Sebastian enjoyed it so much. "Sebastian loved to do gymnastics and worked hard at it."

Sebastian was one of 23 participants in gymnastics at the Lakewood-Trumbull Y who received financial aid to experience a sport and discipline they might not otherwise have. Donors who helped provide an experience to Sebastian and the other 22 participants can feel proud that their gifts changed the life of a child.

Learn more about the Central Connecticut Coast Y Strong Kids Campaign at: <http://www.cccymca.org/make-a-difference/give/>

# STRONG KIDS

## A YMCA Initiative

## AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

After-school programs are an integral part of the CCC YMCA. Children and teens need continued opportunities to learn and engage in meaningful activities. Their success out of school can impact how well they perform in school.

The Stratford Y has expanded their reach into the community and is now providing after-school activities for all eight of the Stratford Elementary Schools.

Thanks to partnerships with the Board of Education and leaders in the community, they have been able to double their school connections in the 2012-2013 school year. Being able to provide daily physical activity, art, nutrition lessons, homework help and family newsletters is only a small part of what occurs daily at each of the Stratford Y After-School Care programs.



The responsibility of creating a safe, friendly and wholesome environment is the key to their success. Families know their child is in a safe place, but also are taking part in an enriching, life changing program each day.

## TEEN ACHIEVERS

The Ralphola Taylor Community Center YMCA in Bridgeport serves older youth ages 12-19 who need a safe place to meet their friends, fellowship and who can benefit from positive adult models in a nationally recognized program called Y Achievers.

Our Y Achievers Program has a focus on career development, academic achievement, leadership development, and social development. The program strives to help the teens improve their academic skills, to achieve higher levels of school performance, to improve overall self-esteem and, ultimately, to prepare for college and future careers.



The program focuses on tutoring, guest speakers from community businesses, workshops, promoting college awareness among parents and the teens, PSAT/SAT preparation, computer training, assistance with college research, and college tours of Southern Connecticut State University, University of Bridgeport and Housatonic Community College.

The workshops included: Budgeting and Banking, Marketing and Branding, Job Interview Strategies, Resume Building, Acting 101 and Shopping Matters. Financial Literacy was also a major component. The students were given lessons on how to save effectively for college. They also learned how to open a bank account and why it's important to keep track of spending.

## SMART DECISIONS FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

Successfully motivating community preteens identified with risk factors associated with obesity (ie: diabetes) isn't easy. But the Soundview Family Y Smart Moves program does it!

The Smart Moves program is held at the Y in Branford. Aja Greene, Soundview Family Y Health and Wellness Director, leads the nutrition component while Y Wellness Coaches lead the physical activities. "The children are learning about foods, what's healthy and what's not," says, Greene. They come together as a group and enjoy a healthy snack and lesson before exercising.



Fifth and sixth graders swim, take a group cycling class, do a circuit training class, and are exposed to many forms of exercise. "They get excited about exercising. We want to encourage a healthy lifestyle that will stick with them throughout their lives" says, Greene.

Offered three times a year, the Smart Moves program meets once a week for eight weeks. New preteens join each session. Currently, it's offered to Branford and North Branford students. East Haven will be added next year. In 2012, 120 youth have been involved.

To extend the program to the entire family, information is sent home and parents are encouraged to participate in the nutrition classes. The entire family gets to use the Y for the duration of the program!

Tara, a fifth grader at Walsh Intermediate School in Branford, is so excited about working out that she is "forcing" her mother to bring her to the Y. Now, Mom is exercising with Tara and thrilled that she has this motivation to be healthier and more active. It's spilling over to the whole family!

Thanks to the support and collaboration of the East Shore District Health Department, the Branford and North Branford School Systems, the School Based Health Center, the Yale RUDD Center for Food Policy & Obesity and Yale-New Haven Hospital, the Soundview Family Y has been able to encourage preteens and their families to form healthy habits.