

BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWSLETTER

YMCA OF METUCHEN, EDISON, WOODBRIDGE & SOUTH AMBOY
ROSE CUSHING, PRESIDENT & CEO

February 2022



PRESIDENT & CEO UPDATE

Dear Board Members:

And just like that...it's 2022. With 2021 in our rearview window, and a fresh, bright, brand new year ahead, comes a renewed hope for—something I would never have imagined asking for two short years ago—normalcy. A determination to upright that apple cart that was toppled over by COVID-19. The hope to see our classrooms filled with students again, to see our fitness rooms and group exercise classes filled to the brim with members, and our swimming pools overflowing with people learning a new skill, practicing for a swim team competition, taking a therapeutic class, or just relaxing and getting in a great workout.

We have some new and exciting things coming up in 2022, including a collaboration with Raritan Bay YMCA and the Middlesex County Initiative to provide wellness offerings at their Center for Lifelong Learning located in Parlin and the return of our special events, including our Annual Dinner! We will also continue to hold virtual special events in the coming year...look for another wine tasting event soon!

Summer camp is around the corner! Registration opened for our summer camp season on February 2nd, and we anticipate filling our camps to capacity this year! We are offering ten camp locations this year, with expanded program opportunities for the children.

As we kick off our 2022 Annual Support Campaign, I am hoping to reach and exceed the established goal of \$100,000 from our Board members which would be a great way to commemorate our 100 year anniversary! ASC Chair Katie Barnes and Co-Chair Bruce Peragallo will be reaching out to Board members to discuss their pledges this year. As you know it is vital that our Board set the tone for staff and community giving. Again, thank you!

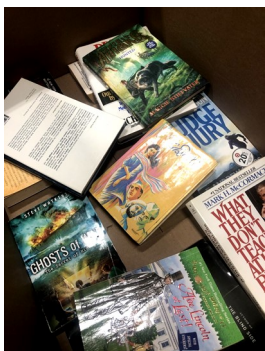
Rose Cushing

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EDISON HOLDS BOOK DRIVE



G.A.P.E. Book Drive: The Edison Y worked with members from the Edison chapter of Global Awareness for Primary Education (G.A.P.E.) to hold a book drive! The book drive encouraged members and staff to give their books a new home and contribute. All

collected books will go to schools in need. The Edison Y looks forward to working with G.A.P.E. again soon!

-Contributed by Caroline Rankin



EDISON FIREFIGHTERS SUPPORT LIVESTRONG PROGRAM

On January 5th, Jim Walsh, Second Vice President of the Edison Firefighter's Association, presented a \$3,377 check to the Metuchen/Edison YMCA LiveSTRONG® Program, in memory of Janice Garbolino. The money was raised through the Edison Firefighters annual cancer awareness shirt sales.



L. to r.: Christine Tolley, Metuchen YMCA Director of Operations, Jim Walsh, Edison Firefighter's Assn., Rose Cushing, President & CEO, YMCA of MEWSA.

This is the 8th year that Edison Firefighters have designed and sold shirts to benefit the LiveSTRONG® program, and they have raised over \$38,500 to date.

We thank them for their continued support!

-Contributed by Julisa Joaquim

YPCC PARTNERS WITH RADIANT CHURCH FOR POP-UP FOOD PANTRY

On December 11th, the YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center partnered with Radiant Church to provide a pop-up food drive hosted by the YPCC. This collaborative effort made for a very successful food drive. While the YPCC provided and set up the venue, Radiant Church provided all of the food and volunteers and the Township provided traffic flow support. The Church expressed their deepest thanks for accommodating the event, noting that it made a difference and helped provide food to hundreds of families in the community. A recipient noted that, having never had to use a food pantry before, she was humbled beyond belief. When she and her daughter arrived home and started opening the boxes, they felt like it was Christmas morning! She thanked the YPCC, Radiant Church and the Township from the bottom of her heart, noting this was the true spirit of Christmas. There was another food drive held on January 15th and two more scheduled for February 12th and March 12th.



-Contributed by Kyle Strohman

WINTER 2022 IMPACT METER



YOUR GENEROSITY AT WORK

See what a difference you made!

*Check out how our cause moved forward over the year with the support and dedication of so many members, donors, staff and friends, like **YOU**.*

GIVE NOW

EDISON Y CELEBRATES MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE



In honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Edison Y collected "Notes for Neighbors" for the Day of Service. All day members and staff wrote out Valentines for our neighbors over at Brighton

Gardens, an Assisted Living facility in Edison.

Dozens of cards were collected guaranteeing a Happy Valentine's Day for the residents!

-Contributed by Caroline Rankin



SOUTH AMBOY ELEMENTARY STUDENTS RECEIVE FREE BIKES!

On December 8, 2021, eight children enrolled in the YMCA's School Age Child Care Program at South Amboy Elementary School received brand new bicycles! The bicycles were donated from Alan Lewis from Professional Team Building & Development. From this company, Sabro Foster and a team of volunteers assembled the bicycles, with a Zoom meeting held to present the bicycles to the children! The children and their families were very excited to receive the bicycles and safety helmets!

The children who received the bicycles included: Hope Smith, Emily Paredes, Davina Matteo, Autumn Tate, Xavier Santos Ferreira, Zayvion Whitehead, Dylan Verdecia and Noah Padilla.

-Contributed by Gerry Gessie



Children who received the bicycles, plus YMCA staff Tony Brewster, SACC Coordinator, Gerry Gessie, Director of Operations, South Amboy YMCA, and Peter Lawrence, SACC Counselor.



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

**WHERE
THERE'S A Y,
THERE'S
A WAY.**

When you give to the YMCA Annual Campaign, you provide youth and families with the resources they need to flourish and thrive. With your support, the YMCA will continue to live up to its promise that no one is turned away from the life changing programs at the Y, regardless of their financial situation.

ANNUAL SUPPORT CAMPAIGN

Join Us

We are looking for volunteers to help serve on the Annual Support Campaign Committee. You determine the time commitment that works for you. Join us at one of the trainings below or call Elizabeth Bennett at the Y to learn more. Come meet like-minded community members who want to ensure that no family, no senior and no child is turned away from the programs at the Y. Membership at the Y is not a requirement.

Information Session / Campaigner Training

Wednesday, February 16 – 6pm – Metuchen Branch

Thursday, February 24 – 6pm – South Amboy Branch

Tuesday, March 1 – 6pm – Edison Branch

Wednesday, March 2 - 6pm - YPCC

Thursday, March 3 – 5pm – Virtual

**To find out more or to register call Elizabeth
Bennett at 732-516-2087 or email
Elizabeth.Bennett@ymcaofmewsa.org**



TOGETHERHOOD UPDATE

-By Paul Edgcomb



Through ***Togetherhood***, our Y delivered solidly throughout 2021 in support of the FPC Metuchen Food Pantry and its work to help food insecure individuals and families. And we did as well in support of New Jersey Blood Services and its efforts to meet the demand for donated blood—which often reached emergency levels.

New Jersey Blood Services – Blood Drives

Four of our blood drives resulted in 60+ units of blood collected—a record for us—which led to another record of 357 units collected for the year. Our previous high was 302 units in 2019. We're starting to show a strong consistency in getting donors to come to our drives and the results follow.

Our growing base of donors who consistently return to our drives continues to be impressive and we're contemplating some form of recognition for these people to say "Thanks" and to build the base of those who can say: *"I'm a regular blood donor at the Metuchen Y."*

Led by Metuchen Branch Board member Kathy Liss, our team of volunteers organizing and running these drives is strong—but we could use more volunteers.

FPC of Metuchen Food Pantry – Food Drives

We closed the year having collected and brought 8,047 items of nonperishable food and \$2,197 in cash and shoppers gift cards to the food pantry.

In December, we took 615 dropped-off items from the Y to the pantry, and we also had a volunteer hold a Street Drive that resulted in 224 items and \$200 cash for the pantry.

A breakdown of how donations came in shows there were 5,421 dropped off at the Y, a scant 50 items picked up at donors homes by volunteers, and 2,576 items collected through street drives. Regarding dollars, \$1,092 was in cash and \$1,105 was in Store Cards. Street Drives are emerging as a terrific way for individual families or groups of families to collect donations on their streets and we hope to significantly grow that aspect of our food insecurity efforts in 2022.

Rich Husar continues to be our mainstay volunteer for drop-offs and has that well in hand – although one or two extra "pairs of hands" wouldn't be turned away. Regarding Street Drives, new volunteers will definitely be needed.

STAFFING AND VOLUNTEER NEWS

BEST WISHES TO JAN GRAYZEL

Best wishes to Jan Grayzel, longtime YMCA Board member and supporter of the YMCA of Metuchen, Edison, Woodbridge & South Amboy who has resigned from the Board of Directors in January.



Jan has served on the YMCA Board of Directors for over 30 years, serving in many capacities. She served as Chair of the Metuchen Branch Board for 10 years and Vice-Chair of the Association Board from 2014-2018. Jan also served on the Board Governance Committee for 18 years and chairing the Edgar Award Committee for several years, being the recipient of this award in 2019. The Edgar Award honors an individual who has greatly serviced the youth of the community, exemplifies community spirit, has contributed to the community through a variety of organizations and in a variety of roles, and is responsive to and interested in the work of the YMCA.

We wish Jan the very best on this new chapter in her life and ask that she continue to keep in touch with her YMCA friends and family!

SOUTH AMBOY WELCOMES LORI FRAGOSO AND THOMAS RYAN

Lori Fragoso has recently joined the South Amboy YMCA as the new Director of School Age Child Care and Camp. Lori has a very strong background in curriculum and program design, event and strategic planning, organizational leadership, academic counseling and multi-cultural affairs.



Lori graduated from Berkeley College with an A.A.S in Business Administration, Specializing in Marketing, a B.S. in Organization Management from Nyack College and a M.A in Justice Administration and Public Service from Saint Elizabeth University. Lori is hoping to continue her education and one day achieve a doctoral degree. In addition, she has a strong belief system in volunteerism and has worked with various organizations such as "No Child Left Behind", "TANF", "Special Olympics", "Police Athletic League", "Community Food Bank of New Jersey", and "School Crisis Training- CERT and Active Shooter" preparation programs. In her free time, Lori loves spending time at the beach, gardening and is an avid music lover.

CONGRATULATIONS CINDY SHIELDS



Congratulations to Senior Child Care Director, Cindy Shields, who was elected President-Elect for the New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)!

NAEYC is the NJ State affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), a membership organization for Early Childhood Professionals. NJAEYC celebrated it's 75th anniversary last year. The organization provides early childhood (birth through age 8) with opportunities to network with each other through professional development events, advocacy and keeping abreast of current trends in the field.

We know that Cindy's extensive expertise, knowledge and background in child care will benefit this organization greatly!



Thomas Ryan is the Health & Wellness Coordinator and a personal trainer at the South Amboy YMCA. Thomas has an associate degree in liberal arts and is currently working on his B.A in General Management. His mission is to help everyone be the best person that they can be, both

physically and mentally.

Thomas has helped many individuals in their fitness journeys. From educating teenagers on how to lift weights properly, helping YMCA members with weight loss, and motivating people to become healthier overall. Thomas is a local South Amboy resident and is community oriented. Personally, Thomas is a big fan of the Star Wars movie series and has a collection of related materials. In addition to training others, Thomas is also passionate about his own training. He trains extensively as a bodybuilder and is aspiring to compete professionally one day.

METUCHEN TO LAUNCH BLOOD PRESSURE SELF-MONITORING PROGRAM



The Metuchen branch will be re-launching its free Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring Program beginning in February. This program features personalized support for developing a blood pressure self-monitoring routine, tips for maintaining cardiovascular health and nutrition education. The Y designed the BPSM Program to help adults with hypertension lower and manage their blood pressure. The free, four-month program focuses on regulated home self-monitoring of one's blood pressure using proper measuring techniques, individualized support and nutrition education for better blood pressure management.

The Y has trained four staff members to be Healthy Heart Ambassadors, including Brenda Werneiwski, Catherine Haugh and Tracy Nunez (pictured below). They will help participants measure and record their blood pressure at least two times a month, learn how to properly measure their blood pressure, engage in weekly personalized calls and participate in monthly Nutrition Education Seminars via Zoom.

Interested participants should contact Brenda Werneiwski, Health & Wellness Director, Metuchen YMCA, at 732-548-2044, Ext. 2249 or at brenda.werneiwski@ymcaofmewsa.org.



-Contributed by Julisa Joaquim

CENTENARY STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT BUILDINGS

This month, Centenary Early Learning Center three-year-old students learned the concepts of sturdy and weak while studying how buildings are made. To understand the concept, they built paper cup pyramids, learning how to make a baseline and stagger the cups so it could grow tall. They also used playdoh and matchsticks to put this concept into practice and made a prototype of their town.

Afterwards, they learned how to spell their names which they put on a skyline filled with skyscrapers.

-Contributed by Sangeetha Anand



UPCOMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

February 23



March 23



April 27

CHILDREN ENJOY WINTER BREAK CAMP AT SOUTH AMBOY Y

Although the temperatures weren't exactly blustery and there wasn't any snow, the South Amboy YMCA Camp Counselors provided the children at South Amboy's Winter Break Camp with daily New Year's Eve crafts, storytelling, gym activities, fun in the bouncy house and the opportunity to swim in the pool.



Each camper had the opportunity to make a NYE Wand with Bells, a New Year's Eve clock with moveable arms to not only teach them how to tell time, but to help with the count down to New Year's 2022. They also designed handprint New Year's Day signs and hanging pipe cleaner flowers for their mothers or sisters.



Each day they went over the importance of keeping their masks on and hand washing. Afternoons provided them with a "wind down time" where they enjoyed watching "Frozen" and relaxing. Some campers took advantage and actually took a little nap before preparing to go home.

-Contributed by Lori Fragoso

YOUTH & GOVERNMENT PROGRAM GRANT RECEIVED

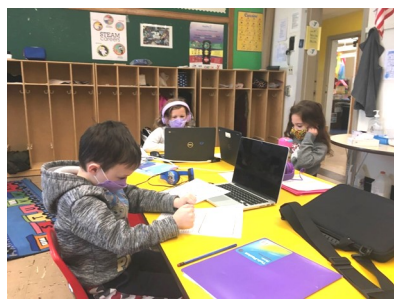
The YMCA received notification of a second grant from the New Jersey State Bar Foundation in the amount of \$4,000 for the Y's Youth and Government Program. This is the second year of funding from the NJSBF which has enabled us to provide program and registration fees for underserved youth in our communities.



This year, there are returning students as well as new ones who have expressed interest in this civic-minded program. The students are gearing up for a Pre-Legislative Session on March 6th and then Legislative Week from April 8-10th. They are studying how to write a bill, presenting their case to student members of the YAG Judiciary/Courts Program and presenting an oral argument to a panel of justices, all consisting of YAG students from the State-wide YMCA Program. Interested participants should contact Gabriella St. Fleur at 732.548.2044, Ext. 2255 or email her at gabriella.stfleur@ymcaofmewsa.org.

GRANT AND DONOR RECOGNITION

NJ State Bar Foundation	\$4,000	To support our Youth & Government Program
PepsiCo Smiles in Action	\$5,000	To support our focus areas of youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.
Starbucks	\$1,000	To support the Metuchen YMCA branch through their Starbucks Neighborhood Grant.



Students were able to keep up with their schoolwork at Colonia Learning Center when the township went to virtual learning for the week.



Harborview Early Learning Center students wear their coats and hat that were donated by a very generous anonymous donor!



The Edison Y's first Teen Night, where teens got to mingle and create new friendships. They were also recruited to join the Teen Leader's Club.



Brenda Werneiske, Wellness Director at the Metuchen Y, receives sock donations from Elijah's Promise for their sock drive in December. They collected over 500 pairs!



The Edison Y partners with Bell Pharmacy to host a booster shot clinic for the community.



South Amboy YMCA was once again able to host its annual Swim with Santa event! This year the children also decorated cookies and had hot chocolate afterwards!



The South Amboy Y offers adult volleyball on Friday nights.



The YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center lights up red in celebration of the Lunar New Year.

YPCC CELEBRATES SWIM TEAM SENIORS

The YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center offers its congratulations to the Somerville High School Swim Team graduating seniors who celebrated their graduation at the YPCC on January 26th.



A special congratulations to Maddie O'Neill, who has been an integral part of their Lifeguard and Swim Instructor Team. In addition to working and going to school, Maddie was also one of the Somerville High School Swim Team Captains. The YPCC congratulates the seniors and thanks them for letting the YPCC be a part of your journey.



L. to r.: Ayush Joshi, Allison Eodice, Mia Harris, Alexis Broggi, Claire Okamoto, Shayaan Ahmed

METUCHEN YMCA RECEIVES SUPPORT FROM STARBUCKS

The Metuchen YMCA has fostered a collaborative relationship with their local Starbucks, who has been very supportive of the YMCA's events by providing free coffee and snacks during Welcoming Week at the Metuchen branch and at their 5K Run/Walk and Jingle Bell Run event.



To augment this wonderful support, the Metuchen Y has recently received notification that they are the recipient of a \$1,000 Neighborhood Grant from the Starbucks Foundation as well! This grant was received as the result of an employee from the local Starbucks nominating the Metuchen YMCA, based on the critical work they are doing in the community and that their partners are passionate about.

We thank Starbucks for their continued support of our organization!

-Contributed by Julisa Joaquim

YMCA CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is Black History Month, where the YMCA honors and celebrates the accomplishments and contributions of Black people who have guided our country's growth and progress. Please visit our [DEI](#) page for local events that are happening!

IMPORTANT DATES

Annual Support Campaign Kickoff
March 7

Blood Drive
February 27 (Metuchen)

Spring I Session Begins
February 27

Camp Registration Opens
February 2

Souper Bowl Food Drive
Jan 15-Feb 15 (Metuchen)

Wine Tasting Event
March 25

UPCOMING MEETINGS

FEBRUARY

- 2** BOARD GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
6:00 p.m.
- 4** PROPERTY COMMITTEE
9:00 a.m.
- 8** FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
6:00 p.m.
- 9** Child Care Committee
6:00 p.m.
- 16** FINANCE COMMITTEE
6:00 p.m.
- 15** SOUTH AMBOY BRANCH BOARD
6:30 p.m.
- 23** BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING
6:00 p.m.

MARCH

- 4** PROPERTY COMMITTEE
9:00 a.m.
- 8** FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
6:00 p.m.
- 9** EDISON BRANCH BOARD
5:30 p.m.
- 10** DEI COMMITTEE
6:00 p.m.
- 15** SOUTH AMBOY BRANCH BOARD
6:30 p.m.
- 16** METUCHEN BRANCH BOARD
8:00 a.m.
- 18** IT COMMITTEE
8:00 a.m.
- 16** FINANCE COMMITTEE
5:30 p.m.
- 21** IT COMMITTEE
8:00 a.m.
- 23** BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING
6:00 p.m.



MISSED AN ISSUE?

All Board newsletters can be found on the YMCA website at

<http://www.ymcaofmewsa.org/about-us/association-newsletter>