

BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWSLETTER

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

January 2020



MISSION POSSIBLE LAUNCHES

The YMCA of MEWSA 2020 Annual Support Campaign will kick-off with eleven high-energy celebrations at each of our three full-facility branches and eight child care centers on January 15th at 5:30pm. Those who join us for a Fiesta in Edison, a Luau in South Amboy or some Mardi Gras revelry in Metuchen will learn more about the many ways our YMCA serves the community as a mission-driven charitable organization. Contributions to our Y are used to support those most in need within the communities we serve, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity for a great YMCA experience.

Under the leadership of Campaign Co-Chairs Katie Barnes and Paul Edgcomb, the kick-offs will usher in an enhanced approach to annual support fundraising for the Association as we look to expand our branch and center-based community efforts. Children at our Child Care Services locations will be participating in Wear Pajamas to School Day and joined by their families in a creative family project during pick-up on the 15th with a great message about how the Y lives our cause.

With an aspirational goal of \$330,000, Mission Possible 2020 will offer opportunities for major donors and businesses to support the Y via our banner recognition program, while the Members-As-Donors component will invite all YMCA members to consider a one-time gift of \$20 in 2020. More than 40% of our campaign will come directly from Board and Staff giving, a testament to our commitment to walk our talk. Be sure to follow YMCA of MEWSA and our branches on Facebook and Instagram for impact stories from our members and for regular campaign updates.

Anyone wanting additional information about our charitable giving or wishing to make a contribution may contact denise.zimmer@ymcaofmews.org or 732-516-2087. 100% of contributions are used to support financial assistance and are tax-deductible in accordance with current regulations.

-Contributed by Denise Zimmer

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LEADER'S CLUB HELPS OUT FOR FOOD DRIVE

Edison Togetherhood was represented at the Thanksgiving Day Food Basket packing on November 25th at the First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen. Members of both the Edison and Metuchen Leader's Club also volunteered at the event.

Edison Branch Board member Joe Costello noted that the turnout at the Thanksgiving Food Drive showed how much the community really cares about others and that it was awesome to be a part of that.

"I felt honored to be able to represent the Edison Y Togetherhood project at the First Presbyterian Church during this Thanksgiving season.", said Togetherhood member Evelyn Lowenstein. "It was wonderful to see participants of all ages help prepare bags of food for over 65 families. Thank you for including me.

The Edison Branch Food Drive is titled Nourish Our Community and collected cash, gift cards and generous donations of food staples. The Food Pantry expressed their sincerest thanks to all of those who donated so generously.

-Contributed by Cindy O'Neill



Photos courtesy of Gabriella St. Fleur



Once again I struggle to find the words to describe the Food Pantry Holiday Dinner! Joyful and festive and soooo much love. I can't remember how many hugs and I gave and how many I received! 100 food pantry clients and friends, fifteen volunteers, and at least fifty youth from the youth group, sharing a meal, listening to music, picking out gifts, and laughing together... so much laughter! I'm so grateful to have had this opportunity for another year... to bring us all together. Thank you to the youth group, our anonymous donor for our gift cards, the Metuchen YMCA and Edison YMCA for their Togetherhood volunteers and food drives, Cai's Cafe for their toy drive, the lions club for our extra meals, and of course our food pantry volunteers who didn't bat an eye at running food out to clients cars in the freezing cold night. Thank you, as always to the congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen and the Borough of Metuchen community for your ongoing support of our mission!

-Sarah Teti, Food Pantry Coordinator, First Presbyterian Church



EDISON VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE PRESIDENTIAL HONORS



For the third year in a row, siblings Archith Raman, 12 years old and Dhyanashri Raman, 16 years old, have received the President's Volunteer Service Award. Archith and Dhyanashri

volunteer their time for many causes, but most notably, they work with the African Library Project to hold book drives to ship books to African schools and villages to start small libraries. The Edison YMCA has helped them host their book drives for which they are very thankful.

To find out more about the African Library Project, click [here](#).

-Contributed by Cindy O'Neill



SOUTH AMBOY HOSTS SWIM WITH SANTA!

The South Amboy branch hosted their annual Swim with Santa (a/k/a City of South Amboy President, Mickey Gross). This year, a pancake breakfast with stories by Mrs. Claus (a/k/a City of South Amboy Councilwoman Zusette Dato) was added for some holiday fun! Both Mr. and Mrs. Claus fit in some time on the fitness equipment as well!



METUCHEN RECEIVES BICYCLE DONATIONS

The Metuchen Branch received a donation of 17 20" BMX bicycles and helmets from companies Ingredion, Johnson Education Center and JP Morgan Chase who all participated in a leadership training with the Leader's Institute. The participants were tasked to build the bikes through a series of challenges and team-building exercises. After the training, the bikes were donated to the Metuchen Y. The bicycles will be used in our afterschool care program, summer camp and Healthy Kids Day to teach about bicycle safety, simple machines and fitness.



Metuchen expressed their thanks to everyone involved in the program, especially Liam Apperley, from The Learning Institute for contacting them about the donations.

-Contributed by Christine Tolley

VETERAN VISITS CENTENARY PRE-K CLASS

Staff and students from Centenary Early Learning Center were honored with a visit from Assistant Pre-K teacher Giselle Valasco's husband, Jorge Stiven Cardenas, who visited the school in honor of Veteran's Day. Jorge serves in the military branch of the Army and is a Supply Specialist and he is also a part of the National Guard. His service is much appreciated as well as his visit to Centenary to talk about the work that he does to serve our country.

-Submitted by Melinda Wilson



ANNUAL SUPPORT CAMPAIGN TRAINING

Denise Zimmer, Director of Financial Development, holds Annual Support Campaign training for all of the branches. The 2020 Annual Support Campaign runs from January 15th to February 29th.



SOUTH AMBOY HOSTS ALL STAFF MEETING



The South Amboy YMCA hosted an all-staff meeting on December 6th to plan the year ahead, learn service expectations and enjoy some team-building opportunities

-Contributed by Karen Robson

TACKLE THE TURF AT SOUTH AMBOY

Back by popular demand, another round of Tackle the Turf begins at the South Amboy branch in January. Members love putting in hard work on Friday nights!

-Contributed by Karen Robson



BOARD MEMBER ALKA ANEJA BEGINS COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

Board member Alka Aneja has embarked on a new community service project called Soul Talks where everyday unsung heroes share how they thrive through adversity. Topics covered include depression, Fragile X Syndrome, paraplegia, adoption, coming out, learning disabilities and many other topics. Alka has created a You Tube channel which can be viewed at the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/soultalkswithalka>



LiveSTRONG® BREAKFAST

The LiveSTRONG® Program held their annual breakfast on December 14th at the Metuchen Senior Center. Metuchen program participant Lorraine LeSter and Edison program participant Minaxi Shah spoke to the crowd about their personal experience with the program.

There were approximately 50 attendees, including staff and volunteers, and each attendee received a LiveSTRONG® at the YMCA holiday ornament and notebook. Stephanie Graff, LiveSTRONG® instructor from Metuchen, led a chair yoga stretch at the end of the breakfast.

-Contributed by Hannah Thomas



METUCHEN CELEBRATES THE NEW YEAR WITH FAMILIES!

On December 20th, the Metuchen Y's Ready Set, Learn program threw a fun 2020 New Year's Celebration for the children and their families. They had a ball pit along with a ball drop and a countdown (at 12pm instead of midnight). They enjoyed dancing to music, blowing noise makers and decorating party hats.

-Contributed by Pam Cohen



STAFFING NEWS

PAT COLANDRA RETIRES

Patricia Colandra (otherwise known as Miss Pat) has retired from the Metuchen Y after 23 years of service. She has worked in multiple areas over the years and most recently was Metuchen's valued Preschool/Kindergarten Teacher and Volunteer Coordinator. When Pat started at the Y she was a part-time Assistant Teacher in the Preschool classrooms. Although she had added on more positions over the years she continued to work in the child care area.



Pat was definitely surprised at her retirement celebration on December 23rd that was attended by Y staff and former students! The Y staff also chipped in to provide Pat with a going away gift. The Kindergarten children from her current class made pictures for Pat that began with "When she retires, Miss Pat should..." she received many responses from going to the beach to playing ninjas to not leaving. These pictures along with various pictures of Pat from over the years were put together into a photo album given to Pat at the party.

In her retirement Pat and her husband plan on selling their house in Metuchen and moving down south to be closer to their grandkids.



YMCA staff attend Y-USA Living Our Cause training, hosted by the South Amboy YMCA.

Have an article or item of interest for the newsletter?
Please submit to Veronica Vargas at veronica.vargas@ymcaofmews.org.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER, KEN DRINKARD

The YMCA of MEWSA welcomes its newest Board member, Kenneth Drinkard.



Ken Drinkard has an extensive background in technology and business audit as well as risk and internal controls. Ken currently works for New York Life Insurance Company as Vice President and Associate General Auditor. He received his bachelor's degree in Accounting from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and his master's degree in business administration from Rutgers Business School.

Ken was born and raised in Perth Amboy, and the YMCA there provided him with his first job checking members into the facility. After graduating from high school, Ken joined the US Army where he served for six years as an application developer. After his service commitment, he moved back to New Jersey, where he lives in Woodbridge with his wife and two children.

Joe has a desire to be more connected with the community and to offer his assistance and expertise. He feels that he would be a great asset to our Board and feels this opportunity could not have come at a better time.

WELCOME JULISA JOAQUIM!

Please meet Julisa Joaquim, Metuchen Branch's new Membership Director!



Julisa Joaquim resides in East Brunswick with husband Miguel and their three daughters. Julisa was born and raised in New York and graduated from St. John's University with a Bachelor of Science, Communication Major and Business Minor.

Julisa is no newcomer to the Y. In 2001, she began her career with the Metuchen YMCA as a new mom who wanted to meet other moms in the community and lose some baby weight. Little did she not that that decision would change the course of her personal and professional life. She started as a part-time enrichment instructor until 2004, and then as Membership & Marketing Director for the Gateway YMCA, as well as the Raritan Bay Area YMCA. Julisa always knew she would return to the YMCA of MEWSA, and as their new Membership director, she looks forward to highlighting Metuchen's history while infusing new and exciting programs and services. Julisa also seeks to ensure exceptional service, member engagement and retention and implementing lead strategies for continuous growth.

Welcome aboard, Julisa!

METUCHEN STUDENTS VISIT SENIOR CENTER

On Friday, December 6th, the Metuchen Y Preschool and Kindergarten Extended Day children visited the Metuchen Senior Center. They sang holiday songs and delivered handcrafted ornaments to the 80 seniors. This was the largest holiday luncheon the Senior Center has ever hosted.

-Contributed by Pam Cohen



EDISON HOSTS 5TH ANNUAL DANCE-A-THON

The Edison branch held its 5th Annual Dance-A-Thon on December 14th. Members came together to raise funds while dancing to Zumba, BollyX, Salsa, Bhangra and Bollywood. Instructors included Sakshi Sharma, Sairah Qureshi, Aanchal Nigam, Laurie Fechter from Edison and Jeanine Abood and Srividya Natarajan from South Amboy. Over \$700 was raised which will go to the Annual Support Campaign.

-Contributed by Deb Wider



METUCHEN HOSTS HOLIDAY DROP & SHOP

The Metuchen Y hosted a Holiday Drop & Shop Kids Night Out for the students from Metuchen's SACC Program with the theme Grinch Whobilation Celebration.

The children played in the Bounce House, enjoyed games, STEM activities, crafts, fun with Mr. Bradford all while parents were able to shop for the holidays! A fun pizza dinner was also included!

-Contributed by Gabriella St. Fleur



THE YMCA CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS!



Metuchen Y's Bradford Lindsey celebrates the second night of Hanukkah by lighting his menorah.



Edison staff get in the holiday spirit!



The Edison Leader's Club made holiday cards for the veterans at the Veteran's Home in Edison. The CEO and Supervisor of Recreation at the Veterans Home sent a letter thanking everyone for their generous donation!



Santa visits students at Grace Early Learning Center



Santa (a Metuchen YMCA member) stops by to visit the Metuchen Preschoolers.



The South Amboy lobby was turned into a cozy warm place for members to sit and chat during the holiday season, complete with a fireplace but minus the marshmallows!



South Amboy kids enjoy holiday camp cooking!



Swimming and Pancake Breakfast with Mr. & Mrs. Claus at the South Amboy YMCA!



The Leader's Club lights up the world with kindness this holiday season.

TRAUMA TRANSFORMATION TRAINING

Thirteen of the YMCA of MEWSA's Child Care Centers are receiving training in a new initiative called Trauma Transformation developed by the Child Wellness Institute of New Jersey. Through a series of training sessions, webinars, a tailored coaching session and technical assistance, the 75 staff members are becoming trauma-informed and are developing trauma-sensitive skills. They learn about adverse childhood experiences, toxic stress, the effects of trauma on the brain and strategies to use. Parent workshops are also offered to teach parents about their emotional triggers and ways to help their children identify and regulate their emotions. The program has shown tremendous success for teachers in their before and afterschool programs. See the full article [here](#).



-Contributed by Cindy Shields

PARENT WORKSHOPS



As part of the Trauma Transformation Training above, parent workshops were hosted on November 18th and December 12th that introduced parents to the subject of "Managing Meltdowns & Taming Tantrums". Parents were taught concepts that include: connecting with your child, how to manage difficult and challenging emotions and how to implement a cozy, or calm down corner in their homes. These tools are possible through a grant provided by the Child Wellness Institute of New Jersey and is being implemented with the Y's School Age students and staff.



-Contributed by Cindy Shields

CITIZENSHIP PREPARATION CLASSES AT THE EDISON Y

The first Edison YMCA Citizenship Preparation class was a success! The Edison Y held their first 8-week session in the fall session with five students in the class and led by volunteer instructor Diane Cammarano. Students focus on civics, U.S. history, vocabulary and English-speaking skills needed to pass the citizenship test and interview. Other than a small materials fee, this class is held free of charge to the community!



Diane Cammarano (pictured left) teaches students in citizenship preparation (3 of the 5 students pictured)

UPCOMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

January 22	☞	February 26	☞	March 25
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<bits & pieces>



YMCA of MEWSA key staff and Board Chair Mike Lackland take a tour of the new Piscataway Community Center—slated to open its doors in May 2020.



Edison staff attend the Chamber of Commerce Holiday Party. Pictured: Jillie Peguero, Cindy O'Neill, Joyce Ship-Freeman, COC President Joseph Coyle and State Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak.



SAY's Afterschool Program had a great time at the Y on the first snow day of the season!



Metuchen SACC students cook pancakes during their STEM session!



South Amboy's 12 Days of Fitness challenge occurred during the holiday to help motivate members and get them engaged with other members.



The Metuchen Leader's Club celebrates the holiday's with a fun game night!



SAY's class instructor's keep members moving even during a fire drill!



South Amboy hosts a potluck dinner during National Family Month.



SAY staff went on a "thank you tour" to thank local community business owners for their support in 2019.



Metuchen staff and Y volunteers wrap gifts at Barnes & Noble to raise money towards the Annual Support Campaign.

SOUTH AMBOY SUPPORTS BASKETBALL TEAMS

South Amboy branch staff, Board and family members support the “Dreamers” basketball team for their home games as they follow their dreams to play basketball professionally.

-Contributed by Karen Robson



SOUTH AMBOY CYCLONES!

South Amboy also supports their newest travel basketball league, the Cyclones! The team is coached by Joseph Cohen, Program Director at the South Amboy Y.

Their first statewide YMCA league game against the Raritan Valley YMCA resulted in a defeat, however, the atmosphere was very energetic and everyone is looking forward to the rest of the season!

-Contributed by Karen Robson



IMPORTANT DATES

Winter Session
January 6–March 1

ASC Kick-Off Events
January 15

Camp Open House (all branches)
February 22 (11am–2pm)

Spring Session
March 2–April 26

Annual Support Campaign
January 15–February 19

Oakcrest Camp & Pool Open House
February 22 (12pm–2pm)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

JANUARY

- 16** FINANCE COMMITTEE
AO CONFERENCE ROOM—6:00 P.M.
- 15** METUCHEN BRANCH BOARD
Metuchen Branch—8:00 a.m.
- 21** SOUTH AMBOY BRANCH BOARD
SOUTH AMBOY BRANCH—6:00 P.M.
- 22** BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING
WERNIK ROOM
5:30 FELLOWSHIP/6:00 P.M. MEETING

FEBRUARY

- 5** BOARD GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
AO Conference Room—5:30 p.m.
- 6** CHILD CARE COMMITTEE
AO Conference Room—6:00 p.m.
- 14** IT COMMITTEE
AO Conference Room—8:00 a.m.
- 18** SOUTH AMBOY BRANCH BOARD
SOUTH AMBOY BRANCH—6:00 P.M.
- 19** FINANCE COMMITTEE
AO CONFERENCE ROOM—6:00 P.M.
- 26** BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING
WERNIK ROOM
5:30 FELLOWSHIP/6:00 P.M. MEETING

MISSED AN ISSUE?

All Board newsletters can be found on the YMCA website at

[http://www.ymcaofmewsa.org/about-us/association-newsletter.](http://www.ymcaofmewsa.org/about-us/association-newsletter)

