

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWSLETTER

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

June 2021



## PRESIDENT & CEO UPDATE

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Dear Board Members:

We have some great things happening at the Y that I am excited to share with you! We were thrilled to hear that beginning May 28th, Gov. Murphy lifted the indoor mask mandate and 6 foot social distancing rules in public places for fully vaccinated people. For us, this meant that our fully-vaccinated members could now enjoy the freedom of working out without having to wear cumbersome face masks! These changes, however, do not apply to our Child Care Centers, After School Programs and Summer Camps, since they must adhere to additional State and local guidelines.

With Gov. Murphy continuing to lift restrictions, we know that this summer is going to look vastly different than last summer! Most of our camps are booked to capacity and the children are very eager to experience summer camp "like the old days". We have also had a major boost in child care registrations for September! We look forward to resuming business as we knew it in the very near future.

We are also very excited about reviving many of our events this year, including the 5K Run/Walk, Golf Classic and Tot Trot & Family Festival. We are also once again offering the Ryan Patterson Memorial Scholarship to local teens who are pursuing a higher education in the fall of 2021. You can find out more information in the newsletter or on the website!

Our Annual Support Campaign has met some challenges this year, but thanks to our committed Boards, staff and campaigners who continue to pound the "virtual" pavement to solicit pledges, we are slowly inching towards that \$320,00 goal! Thank you for your continued support of our organization.

*Rose Cushing*

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FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## EDISON CELEBRATES EID AL-FITR

On Friday, May 14th, Edison staff members Durriya and Lamiya brought in homemade traditional foods and did Henna to celebrate Eid al-Fitr. Eid al-Fitr is a holiday that marks the end of the month-long dawn-to-sunset fasting of Ramadan.

The staff had a great time celebrating and the children in childcare loved learning about it.

*-Contributed by Caroline Rankin*



## YPCC'S GOLF SIMULATOR PUT TO GOOD USE!

Piscataway High School's Golf Team used the YPCC's golf simulator as part of their season training. We are pleased to announce that they have also won the 2021 Greater Middlesex Conference—White Division title, the first divisional championship for them in over 50 years!

<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/piscataway/sections/sports/articles/piscataway-hs-boys-golf-claims-first-divisional-title-in-over-five-decades>



## OAKCREST FEST!

On Saturday May 15th, Oakcrest Fest was held for the second time. Many local businesses and vendors volunteered their time to participate, including the Grand Falloons, Rita's Italian Ice of Woodbridge, Geico, Hackensack Meridian Health, FC Copa Academy, Our Place Pizza and Catering, the Edison Animal Shelter, Wok and Roll and more! Activities and entertainment included arts and crafts, an obstacle course, a bounce house, Zumba with Sakshi and a performance from Polymorph, a local band. The event brought in many community members and led to numerous Oakcrest Pool and summer camp registrations. Some vendors were also kind enough to donate to the Annual Support Campaign!

*-Contributed by Caroline Rankin*



## MEWSA AWARDED METUCHEN PUBLIC SCHOOL CONTRACT!

The YMCA of MEWSA received notification from the Metuchen Board of Education that it was awarded the contract to provide afterschool services to Moss and Campbell schools. Special thanks to Christine Tolley and Cindy Shields who worked tirelessly on the application! This also comes on the heels of the South Amboy YMCA receiving the afterschool contract for South Amboy Elementary School!

## ECC/JCC HOSTS FAMILY FUN DAY

The Edison YMCA and the Jewish Community Center (JCC), better known as the Community Campus, hosted Family Fun Day on May 2nd. The joint event was the first ever between the two organizations and featured free group exercise class



demo, arts and crafts, games and discounted rates for new members. Not only did the day bring in new memberships, but also camp registrations!

The two organizations are looking forward to many more shared events to offer to the community.

*-Contributed by Caroline Rankin*

## MEET...JOHN THALLEMER

John, a member of the YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center, was recovering from herniated disc surgery which required extensive rehabilitation. Instead of going to rehab, John took matters into his own hands and opted to join the Piscataway YMCA instead, believing that he could improve his strength through exercise. At one point, John was having difficulty walking or doing much on a daily basis. His exercise regime began with exercising in the pool three times a week to build up his overall strength. Once he felt confident enough in his ability to move around more comfortably, he began to utilize the Wellness Center for weight training. This is where he believe the YPCC "saved him". He was able to build his strength back up to a point where he feels "almost" back to normal. Putting his wellness aside, John is also grateful for the 7th Grade Initiative Program (a free membership for 7th graders), because his son was able to come in and play basketball as well as exercise. "Giving my son the opportunity to have physical activity during these times helps my son who is often home doing schoolwork", said John. "This gives him the opportunity to get out of the house and exercise, especially during the winter months when many outdoor activities are limited."



John further commented that the YPCC is a welcoming place for all and the staff make the experience even better, which makes coming to the facility even more worthwhile.

*-Contributed by Bryan Elsasser*

## KEN SHIRK HAS SPRING CLEAN-UP

Pastor Jim Krombholz and volunteers from St. James Luther Church (pictured right) helped clear out the weeds in the Ken Shirk Learning Center's toddler playground.



It was greatly appreciated that they gave up a sunny Saturday morning to support the Center's spring cleanup!

*-Contributed by Heidi Robbins*



*Volunteers Garley Gnaskowski, Kaylee Sahadi, Meghan Sahadi, Alaynna White, Sue Lincoln, Kim Sahadi, Heather Lubonski, Pastor Jim Krombholz*

# TOGETHERHOOD UPDATE

*By Paul Edgcomb*



## **Addressing the Problem of Local Food Insecurity**

Our Metuchen Branch YMCA continued taking steps to reduce local food insecurity, as **Togetherhood** volunteers brought donated items and cash left at our branch, and items picked up at people's homes, to the pantry. And, our street drive initiative took a big step forward thanks to Metuchen Branch Board member **Marisha Wignaraja**, who built a team of 19 adults and young people on Linden Avenue to hold a five-day drive there in early May. The team helped spread the word, collect, and deliver 438 items and \$325 in store gift cards to the pantry.

As of May 31, combined 2021 Metuchen YMCA efforts have resulted in **3,071** items collected, cash donations of **\$447**, and gift card donations of **\$425**.

Looking ahead, in June, the Metuchen Branch will continue its four-option approach – indoor drop-offs at the Y every day, outdoor drop-offs at the Y on Wednesday afternoons, pick-ups at people's homes on Wednesday afternoons, and street drives. Then, throughout July and August we will return to our traditional summer **Hunger Doesn't Take A Vacation** drive.

*To continue to make our food insecurity initiatives happen we need volunteers to transport donations from the Y to the pantry and to organize street drives.*

*Please contact Paul Edgcomb, [pedgcomb@optonline.net](mailto:pedgcomb@optonline.net) or 732-887-6633 to volunteer.*

## **Addressing the Need for Donated Blood**

So far in 2021 we have hosted six blood drives at three branches, helping to collect 299 units of whole blood, and meet the medical needs of as many as 897 people.

Here's a breakdown of our combined effort in three Middlesex County communities:

**Metuchen** – two drives, in February and April, collecting 123 units

**Piscataway** – two drives, in March and May, collecting 98 units

**South Amboy** – two drives, both in February, collecting 78 units

In Metuchen, where we resumed actively hosting drives in 2017, we achieved a milestone on April 24, when we received our 1,000<sup>th</sup> donated unit.

That day we collected a near-record 69 units and have now collected a total of 1,083 units at the 20 drives we have held in the past four years.

*To continue to make our blood drives happen we need volunteers to:*

*Contact past donors and help schedule them for appointments.*

*Contact potential new donors to encourage them to donate.*

*Greet and provide day-of-drive assistance to arriving donors.*

*Please contact Paul Edgcomb, [pedgcomb@optonline.net](mailto:pedgcomb@optonline.net) or 732-887-6633 to volunteer.*

## **Upcoming Y-hosted blood drives**

Metuchen Branch – Sunday, June 27

Piscataway Branch – Thursday, July 15

# LEARNING CENTERS CELEBRATE WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

The Week of the Young Child™ is celebrated from April 10th -16, 2021 by all of our Learning Centers and is a time to recognize that children's opportunities are the Y's responsibilities, and to recommit to ensuring that each and every child experiences the type of early environment—at home, at child care, at school, and in the community—that will promote their early learning. Events during the week include Kick Off Saturday, Music Monday, Tasty Tuesday, Work Together Wednesday and Family Friday. See below for some of the highlights from Week of the Young Child!

*-Contributed by Melinda Wilson, Rita MacNeill*



Week of the Young Child at Centenary Early Learning Center.



Miss Heidi and children from Harborview Early Learning Center created a handprint mural for Artsy Thursday during the Week of the Young Child.



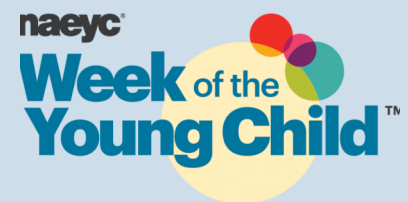
The 3-year-olds at Centenary Early Learning Center had fun working together as a group using a hula hoop to travel in different directions and working together to go up and around the tree.



All four classes at Harborview Early Learning Center planted tomatoes and green peppers in their garden on Work Together Wednesday.



Ms. Carolyn read a story called "Helping" to Centenary ELC students which discussed how to take care of plants. The children then went outside and watered the daffodils in the garden.



# STAFFING NEWS

## WELCOME SCOTT REINERS

The South Amboy YMCA welcomes new Aquatics Director, Scott Reiners! Scott grew up around water with his backyard being a lake, so he was destined to have a career in aquatics from a very young age. He became a competitive swimmer as well as being a lifeguard for more than 20 years. He swam for the College of New Jersey, attaining his NCAA National "B" cuts, and received numerous certifications including Water Safety Instructor, Lifeguard Instructor, American Swim Coaches Association and USA-S Safesport. He also holds an Olympic lifting certification from USA -W and a Crossfit instructor certification from ANSI. When he's not in the water, Scott enjoys board games, comics and tabletop RPGs as well as playing with his dachshund, Riker.



Welcome aboard, Scott!

## CAROLINE RANKIN RECEIVES PROMOTION!

Congratulations to Caroline Rankin who has been promoted to Membership & Marketing Director at the Edison YMCA! Caroline has a long history with the Y. Her family have been members for over 20 years and Caroline has worked with the Y for 5 1/2 years. She began her career on the wellness floor before moving to the Welcome Center as a Member Services Representative and then as Membership Connector. She holds her bachelor's degree in Communication in PR and she is currently completing her master's degree in Communication in Corporate Purpose and Social Impact, both from Rutgers University. Caroline was also a 2019 recipient of the John G. Malinowski Rising Star award, and for good reason!



Congratulations, Caroline!

## WELL WISHES TO RALPH STEINHARDT!

We wish past YMCA President and Board member Ralph Steinhardt well wishes as he recovers from 75 days in the hospital after he tested positive for COVID-19. Rose has reached out to him and he is in good spirits and regaining more and more strength every day!



## CHILD CARE COMMITTEE WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Welcome Raul Castillo to our Child Care Committee! Raul is the Community Education Coordinator at Prevent Child Abuse—New Jersey, a non-profit organization that promotes great childhoods, positive parenting and healthy families. Raul coordinates the Middlesex County Council for Young Children, which brings together local families and stakeholders to advocate for the health and education of children. We know he will make a great addition to the Committee!



Welcome Rosela Roman, Director of the Mobile Family Success Center to our Child Care Committee! Rosela has a masters degree in social work from Rutgers State University. She has been working with the Family Success Center Network for nine years, first starting with Harmony Family Success Center located in New Brunswick and is currently with Mobile Family Success Center located in Edison. Rosela has a passion for helping children and families thrive through community engagement, advocacy and leadership. She is bilingual in both English and Spanish. Welcome, Rosela!



## GRANT RECEIVED FOR YSCHOLARS PROGRAM

The YMCA received notification of a grant in the amount of \$2,500 from Investor's Foundation to support the YScholars Program which provides math and reading skills to children ages 5-12 during out-of-school time to provide them with the building blocks to succeed both academically as well as socially. The grant will cover the costs for children from low-income families in the communities that we serve.

Right, Investor's Bank representative DeAngelina Inman presents the check to the YMCA while the children show their appreciation!

For more information on the program, contact Cindy Shields, Senior Child Care Director, at [cindy.shields@ymcaofmews.org](mailto:cindy.shields@ymcaofmews.org).



Back row: Angelique Nabi, Director, Edgar Early Learning Center; Cindy Shields, Senior Child Care Director; Rose Cushing, President & CEO; Mike Lackland, Chairman of the Board, DeAngelina Inman, Investor's Bank.

At table and standing: Gabriella St. Fleur, Child Care Director, Metuchen YMCA Child Care, children from the Learning Center.



Thank you to Allstate volunteer for being a positive force for change in our community! Pratibha Katariya, an Allstate Insurance Agent as well as serving on the Edison Branch Board of Managers, gave of her time and enabled us to receive a

Allstate Foundation Helping Hands Grant. The Allstate Foundation supports the causes that Allstate agency owners, financial specialists and employees care about most by providing Helping Hands Grants to nonprofits where they volunteer their time to bring out the good in their communities.



## GRANT AND DONOR RECOGNITION

|   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| <b>NJ STATE ALLIANCE COVID-19 RELIEF FUND</b> | \$15,000 | Summer Camp and Food Insecurity                                |
| <b>ALLSTATE FOUNDATION HELPING HANDS</b>      | \$1,000  | Recognizing Volunteer Service of Pratibha Katariya/Edison YMCA |
| <b>PNC BANK FOUNDATION</b>                    | \$2,500  | YScholars Program  |

Visit <https://www.ymcaofmews.org/about-us/annual-report> to view the Annual Report and see a full listing of our donors.

## HEALTHY KIDS DAY

On Saturday, April 24th, Ken Shirk Learning Center held its Healthy Kids Day. The children were led in a CATCH program of physical activities by Mr. Ahmad. With the assistance of Ms. Isabell, they made lavender scented stress balls and planted lavender seeds in pots they decorated. A STEAM activity encouraged children and their parent to create the longest paper chain out of a single sheet of construction paper.

*-Contributed by Heidi Robbins*



## RYAN PATTERSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



The YMCA of MEWSA is once again offering its Ryan Patterson Memorial Scholarship to a local teen who is pursuing a higher education degree in the fall of 2021. The scholarship award will be \$2,000. Applicants must demonstrate their excellence in academics, sports or the arts, have made an impact on the community through volunteer work, a service project or other means, live by the golden rule, and have influenced others in a positive way and advocated for others less fortunate.

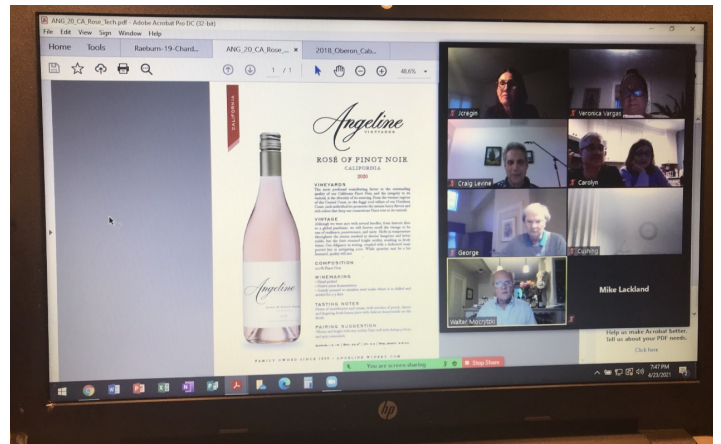
Teens can submit the online application and get more information on the website at [ymcaofmewsa.org/giving/ryan-patterson-memorial-scholarship](http://ymcaofmewsa.org/giving/ryan-patterson-memorial-scholarship).

## VIRTUAL WINE TASTING EVENT A SUCCESS!

The Y's first ever virtual wine tasting event was a huge success! With 40 registrants and more than 90 people participating, everyone learned about the four wines that were supplied, including how to appreciate them using all four senses. Registrants also received a gift bag with a professional corkscrew, wine pump with stopper, and tote bag.

Special thanks to Jay Elliot for organizing the event, Sommelier Walt Mocrytzki, and The Wine Cellar for providing all the wines at cost.

Through this event, over \$2,300 was raised for the Annual Support Campaign!



## CENTENARY STUDENTS CREATE GARDEN

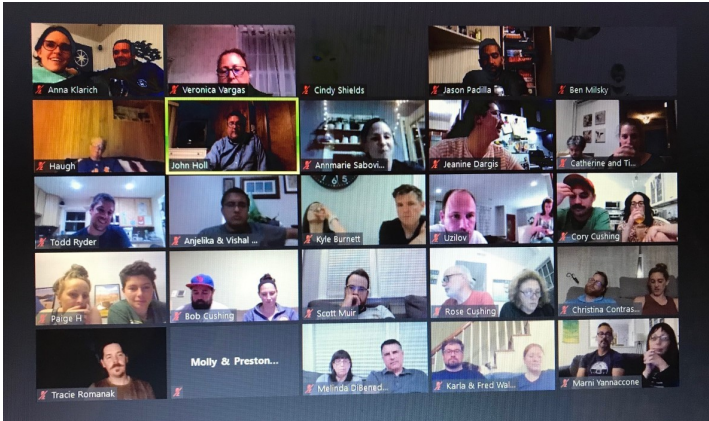
Centenary students are learning and growing in Kindergarten! After weeks of studying and observing the cycle of plants, students and teachers worked together and planted two gardens! It was decided to grow a pizza garden and a salad garden. The children learned all about which plants belonged in each garden. They used the internet and non-fiction books, along with their math skills of measuring and adding, to plot out the gardens and then got to work! They children were very excited to watch the garden grow!

*-Contributed by Linda Rutter*





# VIRTUAL BEER TASTING FUNDRAISING EVENT



Cindy Shields, Senior Child Care Director, organized a virtual Beer Tasting event on Friday, May 21st, with all proceeds going to the Annual Support Campaign/Child Care Services. The event was very successful with over 40 participants, and raised \$1,700!

Participants tasted six premium beers from local breweries and were given the background on each from host and Centenary dad, John Holl, who is also the Beer Editor of Wine Enthusiast magazine and host of Drink Beer, Think Beer podcast. This was a great and creative way to raise funds for our Annual Support Campaign!

## METUCHEN HOLDS TEAM VACCINE PROGRAM

The Metuchen YMCA began its Team Vaccine Program, designed by a group of dedicated and resourceful Metuchen residents who volunteer their time to help their eligible neighbors gain access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

To date, Team Vaccine has helped schedule over 200 appointments, and counting!

*-Contributed by Julisa Joaquim*



## CENTENARY CELEBRATES NURSE'S DAY

Centenary Early Learning Center is working in collaboration with Lincoln Tech of Iselin to provide instruction to the children at the Center.



The LPN students are working on the children's immunization records, Classroom First Aid Kits and a presentation of COVID-19 Safety for the children.

The student nurses were able to earn credits doing this for their LPN certification.

We greatly appreciate their support!

*-Contributed by Melinda Wilson*

## UPCOMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

June 23



September 22



October 27

# <bits & pieces>



SACC students getting ready for Camp Munsee enjoy a special treat of Italian Ice on a beautiful spring day!



The Child Care Learning Centers celebrated Child Care Provider Appreciation Day on May 7th.



Special visitors in the backyard of the Association Office



Students at Harborview Early Learning Center help clean up around the school's grounds on Earth Day.



Young students from the Young Explorers Program perform experiments to learn new and exciting things! This program was made possible through grant funding from the PNC Foundation.



Centenary's infants and toddlers enjoy the flower garden.

# YOUTH & GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

The Y's very inaugural launch of the much anticipated Youth & Government Program was a great success! Through the efforts of Gabriella St. Fleur and Matthew Melchione's hard work and dedication, the program took off and had six committed young adults who were excited to be involved with the YAG Program.

The youth met twice a month through Zoom calls to learn about the three branches of government, lead discussions on local government topics and learn the fundamentals of parliamentary procedure, as well as writing a bill and mastering the art of public speaking. The conference was virtually this year and was held on April 20, 22, 24 and 25.



At the conclusion of the conference, our delegation received awards for the following:

Committee 1 Outstanding First Year Delegate  
Caroline Schleif

Crisis Co-Op/Best Overall Team  
Grace Johnson

Committee 13 outstanding First Year Delegate  
Aishika Ghante

Outstanding and Premier Delegations- 12<sup>th</sup> out of 26

After the conference, the students were invited to the Y to have a socially distanced, boxed lunch together. They really enjoyed the program and can't wait to participate again next year! Great job, Gabby & Matt!

*-Contributed by Christine Tolley*

# HARBORVIEW'S STEM PROJECT WITH BUTTERFLIES



The students at Harborview Early Learning Center learned how caterpillars turn into butterflies by experiencing the entire process. The classroom received five caterpillars which turned into Chrysalids over the period of two weeks. The Chrysalids then turned into butterflies, completing the life cycle. The children released the butterflies into the environment.



Young student Gage was the only one brave enough to touch one!

*-Contributed by Rita MacNeill*

## IMPORTANT DATES

**Father's Day**  
June 20

**Oakcrest Camp Begins**  
June 28

**Richard Hale Memorial Golf Classic**  
October 7

**Summer Camp Begins**  
June 21

**Janice Garbolino 5K Run/Walk**  
September 25, 2021

**Tot Trot & Fall Festival**  
October 10

# UPCOMING MEETINGS

## JUNE

- 2** BOARD GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
ZOOM CALL—5:30 P.M.
- 4** PROPERTY COMMITTEE  
ZOOM CALL—9:00 A.M.
- 8** FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
ZOOM CALL—6:00 P.M.
- 8** SOUTH AMBOY BRANCH BOARD  
ZOOM CALL—6:30 P.M.
- 10** DEI COMMITTEE  
ZOOM CALL—6:00 P.M.
- 16** FINANCE COMMITTEE  
ZOOM CALL—5:30 P.M.
- 18** IT COMMITTEE  
ZOOM CALL—8:00 A.M.
- 23** BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING  
ZOOM CALL—6:00 P.M.

## JULY

- 2** PROPERTY COMMITTEE  
Zoom Call—9:00 a.m.
- 19** EDISON BRANCH BOARD  
Zoom Call—8:30 a.m.
- 21** METUCHEN BRANCH BOARD  
ZOOM CALL-8:00 A.M.

*Enjoy  
your  
summer*



### MISSED AN ISSUE?

All Board newsletters can be found on the YMCA website at

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