

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWSLETTER

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

October 2021



## PRESIDENT & CEO UPDATE

Dear Board Members:

Well, summer has flown by in a blink, and here we are, immersed in a brand new school year. With children back in the classrooms, we are being more vigilant than ever to protect them and our staff by having the children and staff wear face masks while in the classroom and implementing other healthy and safety factors.

We also launched our Fall I session, with our first ever interactive digital program guide that you can view [here](#). Our focus remains on swimming lessons which can be offered safely to all of our members, while adult, youth and enrichment programs are slowly being re-introduced, as members and the community feel more comfortable coming into our branches to participate once again in our offerings.

I do hope that our Board, staff and community were spared any harm from Hurricane Ida. As we saw firsthand, many of our communities faced devastating destruction and loss of life, especially in our service area of Piscataway. With the YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center as a designated emergency shelter, I am so proud that we were able to be there for those Piscataway residents who needed us. As a result, we were able to serve 80 residents by offering food, A/C, coffee, hot showers and a place to sleep during this emergency.

We were once again able to host Welcoming Week from September 10-19, a nationwide movement that celebrates the contributions of immigrants and refugees as well as inspire people to build inclusive communities that embrace immigrants and foster opportunity for all. Please see pages 4-5 for a glimpse into our very busy week!

Our 25th Annual 5K Run/Walk was a huge success! Besides the weather being picture-perfect, our many sponsors, staff and volunteers helped make the day a great one. Please visit pages 8 and 9 to see some great moments from the day and visit our [website](#) to see a full list of our sponsors.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rose Cushing".

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## EDISON Y HOLDS SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

The Edison branch held a school supply drive during Welcoming Week!

All donations from their members went directly to the children in need at the Edison Housing Authority. This ensured that everyone can participate and learn in school to their best ability.

*-Contributed by  
Caroline Rankin*



## YPCC PROVIDES EMERGENCY SHELTER & SERVICES

Kyle Strohman, Executive Director for the YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center, a FEMA-designated emergency shelter for Piscataway Township, reports that as a result of the devastation of Hurricane Ida, the YPCC was able to assist over 80 community members, giving them a safe harbor while they were waiting for family and friends to pick them up. Over 20 people slept there on Wednesday and Thursday evening when they had nowhere else to go. The YPCC provided food, coffee, A/C and hot showers to these residents. They continue to provide a place for residents in nearby apartment buildings to come take a hot shower, for those still without water.

*-Contributed by Kyle Strohman*

## GRACE'S GARDEN FLOURISHES!

The YMCA of MEWSA received a gardening grant from KidsGardening.org this summer to replace the destroyed garden beds that have been unusable for several years. Thanks to this grant, the preschoolers at Grace Early Learning Center were able to finally plant their garden again and produce lots of healthy, yummy vegetables. Pictured right, they enjoyed picking cucumbers with Miss Elana and were excited about eating them later! The children are patiently watching their pumpkin patch to see the start to their future jack-o-lanterns!

*-Contributed by Samantha Coté*



## TEE OFF FOR KIDS RICHARD HALE MEMORIAL GOLF CLASSIC

Supporting the Send a Kid to Camp  
Scholarship Program

**REGISTER NOW!**  
**ONLY A FEW SPOTS LEFT!**

**Thursday,  
October 7**

•  
**Metuchen Golf &  
Country Club**





## AMAZON DONATES \$25,000 TO EDISON YMCA



The YMCA of MEWSA presented a plaque to Amazon officials on

Saturday, September 25th

in recognition of their \$25,000 "Illuminator" donation, which will support youth development programming at the Edison YMCA/Community Campus. The grant will allow the Y to further its mission of nurturing the potential of every child and teen in the communities that we serve.



Pictured l. to r.: Edison Director of Operations Erin Siemers, Councilwoman Joyce Ship-Freeman, Amazon representative Brian Quinn and YMCA of MEWSA President & CEO, Rose Cushing.

## OUR SAVIOR'S LEARNING CENTER REOPENS ITS DOORS!



Our Savior's Learning Center, which has been closed since March 16, 2020, reopened on September 1st to provide Before & After School Care and Kindergarten Extended Day programming for students grades K-5 at Menlo Park Elementary School in Edison. The Center graciously opened its doors again to provide this programming to children and families in need of School Age Child Care Services. This location is conveniently located across the street from the school and the staff walk them to and from school daily. Shyby Joy, who had previously worked in that program as the Kindergarten & School Age Teacher, is currently the Site Manager overseeing the daily operations of the Center.

*-Contributed by Cindy Shields*



## YMCA OF THE USA HIRES NEW PRESIDENT

As we bid a fond farewell and happy retirement to former Y-USA President Kevin Walker after his inspiring and impactful 43 years of service to the Y, we welcome incoming President, Suzanne McCormick. Suzanne left her position as President, United Way Worldwide/US, to take the role at Y-USA. She will be the first female to lead Y-USA in its 170 year history.

Suzanne commented, "I am stepping into this role at this critical time in our history which allows me to leverage every aspect of my experience and my expertise. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity perfectly aligns with my personal mission, my values, my passion and my commitment to equity. I'm excited to support and advocate for YMCAs across the country as they continue to improve the lives on millions of people every day and build more inclusive, resilient communities where everyone can thrive."



Suzanne holds a B.A. in Political Science from Duke University and is an alumni of the Peace Corps, where she taught English in Thailand. We wish her much luck in her new position!

# WELCOMING WEEK



The YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center, in partnership with Piscataway Township, celebrated India's Independence Day with a flag raising ceremony on Saturday, August 14th at the YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center. Council President At Large Kapil K. Shah presided over the ceremony, along with many other dignitaries to celebrate India's 75th anniversary of independence.



The Metuchen community joins together to participate in Fitness Around the World.



Edison members were encouraged to mark their place of origin on the map.



Metuchen members enjoy free coffee from Starbucks!







Edison YMCA staff contributed recipes from their own family's cultures that members could take home with them!



South Amboy decorates the branch with flags around the world to represent the different cultures of their members.



South Amboy provides healthy snacks for it's members.



South Amboy members guess how many beans are in the jar to win a swag bag!



Edison members share what they love about the Y!

# STAFFING NEWS

## WELCOME LIZ BENNETT

Welcome Elizabeth (Liz) Bennett, the YMCA's new Director of Financial Development! Liz has over 21 years of nonprofit experience, most recently for Clara Maass Medical Center. In addition, she has helped raised funds for organizations including the NJ Performing Arts Center, the UN Foundation, Liberty Science Center and the Boys & Girls Club of Newark. Her volunteer service includes working with special needs children at Camp Fatima in NJ and with CASA of Union County, where she serves as Special Advocate for children in the foster care system. Bennett is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and a 2015 Lead NJ Fellow. She attended Rutgers University, graduating with a BA in Urban Studies. Liz currently resides in Rahway with her husband, Jason and their dog, Maddie. In her spare time, Liz enjoys running, reading, cooking, knitting and watching the Yankees.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO CHRISSY TOLLEY ON 30 YEARS!

Congratulations to Chrissy Tolley, who celebrates her 30 year anniversary with the YMCA of MEWSA this year! A true testament to the Y promoting within, Chrissy began her career as a Camp Counsellor in 1991. Over the years, Chrissy has ascended the ranks, working predominantly in school age programs and camp, and then transitioning into Senior Program Director at the Metuchen YMCA. In 2019, she was appointed Director of Operations at the Metuchen branch.



Chrissy has always believed in the Y's vision and mission and has a strong passion for community service, evident in the many clothing, food and blood drives that are held at the Metuchen branch each year. She has also been a very strong advocate for the Y, engaging with local businesses for donations, whether they be monetary or in-kind, for our Annual Campaign or to support our many fundraising events. We are never surprised when Chrissy walks into the AO with a BBQ grill, a set of golf clubs, a man's watch or a case of mouthwash!

While many can boast of a long tenure with the Y, not everyone can say that they have been at the same branch for their entire career! Congratulations Chrissy, and we hope that you are here for another 30 years!

## WELCOME DAN HONTZ

The YMCA at the Piscataway Community Center welcomes Dan Hontz, their new Program Director! Dan is a graduate of Penn State University with a degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science. He has traveled all over in his career and lived in six different states. With his passion in youth development, environmental education, camp and programming, he's had the opportunity to work with thousands of people all over the country, including two previous YMCA's. An avid outdoorsman and lover of sports, Dan is excited to join the Piscataway community with his fiancée and French Bulldog and do all he can to give back to its residents.



## BRUCE PERAGALLO BECOMES A GRANDPA!

Congratulations to Bruce Peragallo, who welcomed his beautiful new granddaughter, Kayleigh Florence-Flynn, on July 30, 2021! Kayleigh's proud parents are Bruce's daughter, Lindsey Peragallo-Flynn and husband Brian Flynn.





## SOUTH AMBOY FORMS PARTNERSHIP WITH ESCNJ

The South Amboy YMCA has formed a partnership with the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey with the South Amboy YMCA being designated as a "volunteer work site" for children with developmental disabilities. They currently have three students with Autism within the program that are eligible to volunteer



From l. to r.: Gerry Gessie, Director of Operations at SAY; Michelle Randall, ESCNJ Counsellor; students Faith Cannon, Jayvon Velez and Emma Bolton; Joe Cohen, Facility Director.

at the branch, which would consist of cleaning the Wellness Center and serving as greeters at the Welcome Center. The students will be scheduled to volunteer on Friday afternoons. The long range plan could also include students from this group becoming lifeguards. The representatives indicated that some of the students are high-functioning, so lifeguarding is a possibility for the future.

Since their founding in 1977, The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ) has evolved to become the largest Educational Services Commission in New Jersey, providing educational and business services to over 700 school districts and

municipalities throughout the state. The ESCNJ operates six of its own schools for student's ages 3-21 with autism, multiple disabilities, and at-risk behaviors, including two with onsite clinical support services.

*-Contributed by Gerry Gessie*

## GRANT AND DONOR RECOGNITION

<b>Enbridge</b>	\$15,000	To support our mission of youth development within the community of Metuchen.
<b>Amazon</b>	\$25,000	Youth Development focus area is Edison Community Campus.
<b>PNC Foundation</b>	\$7,500	For professional development of Early Learning and Learning Center teachers post-COVID.



## MOMENTS FROM THE 25TH ANNUAL 5K RUN/WALK

The Y's 25th Annual 5K Run/Walk was held on September 25th and was a huge success! Thanks to our many sponsors and to Wegmans for providing fruit and water, Starbucks for providing coffee and breakfast goodies, Firefighters for organizing a t-shirt fundraiser, Friendly Vending for providing water and granola bars and Bagel Pantry for providing bagels. Please visit our website for a full list of sponsors.

### Our Volunteers

Here are just a few of the many volunteers from this year's race.



Bradford Lindsey serves as the DJ



Adithya Venkateswaran  
and Caroline Rankin  
cheer on the runners!



Tom Zimmerman mans the  
LiveSTRONG® table



Board members Alka Aneja & Seema  
Pande at the registration tables



Sakshi Venkateswaran  
and Deb Wider



Liz Bennett and  
Paul Edcomb



Julisa Joaquim



Annmarie Sabovick  
and her two sons



Staff begin arriving at 6:00 a.m. to set up

### The Garbolino Family



### It's Warm-Up Time!



Sakshi Venkateswaran warms up the runners with an  
energetic medley of music that got everyone dancing!



## It's Race Time!



## Meet a Few of Our Winners!



The 25th Annual 5K Run/Walk was a huge success! It was great to see everyone in person again and the weather couldn't have been more cooperative! There were 200 runners/walkers registered this year, and we are already looking forward to next year!



## SOUTH AMBOY WATERFRONT BEACH CLEANUP

Tom Ryan, Wellness Coordinator, spoke to the community about healthy lifestyle choices and represented the South Amboy YMCA at the South Amboy Waterfront Beach Cleanup on Saturday September 18th. Edison Y Childcare students Clark and Lillia pitched in to fill a bag and do their part! The event was hosted by Mayor Henry's Wellness Campaign, South Amboy Clean Communities and the South Amboy Green Team.

*-Contributed by Annmarie Sabovick*



## YMCA OF MEWSA RECEIVES DONATION FROM ENBRIDGE



The Enbridge Corporation has made a donation in the amount of \$15,000 to the YMCA of MEWSA to support our youth development initiatives, specifically at the Metuchen YMCA. We look forward to a long-term relationship with the Enbridge Corporation!

Pictured l. to r.: President & CEO Rose Cushing, Board Chair Mike Lackland, Enbridge representatives Max Bergeron and Tim Sullivan, Vice-Chair Katie Barnes and Financial Development Director Liz Bennett

## CHILD CARE OFFERS HOPE & HEALING PRESENTATION

Child Care Services, in collaboration with the Somerset County Mental Health Center and the NJ Hope & Healing Crisis Counseling Program, will be presenting an interactive experience for children and adults to lessen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through the use of storytelling, movement and song in Spanish and English. The presentation will be held virtually on Tuesday, October 5th at 3:30 p.m. and is free of charge. To register, click [HERE](#).



## CHILD CARE STAFF RECEIVE TRAINING

Approximately 90 Early Education staff from the Child Care Centers participated in annual In Service training on August 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>. They were happy to gather again for in-person professional development led by trainers from within and outside of our organization on a variety of subjects ranging from child development, how to help children thrive post-COVID, inclusion and many more subject of interest. The rest of the week was dedicated to cleaning centers and preparing for the new school year, staff meetings, goal-setting and team building activities throughout our system of Early Childhood Education programs.



*-Contributed by Cindy Shields*



## SOUTH AMBOY PARTICIPATES IN ARTS FESTIVAL

The South Amboy YMCA participated in the South Amboy Arts Festival on September 12th. This event brought out the entire community as well as the local businesses.

It was great to see the community engaged in all the different activities this event had to offer as well as the food and music.

*-Contributed by Mary Valera*



## ROSE CUSHING ADDRESSES STAFFING SHORTAGES ON NBC NIGHTLY NEWS

Rose Cushing, President & CEO, was invited to appear on NBC Nightly News to talk about the severe staffing shortages that childcare centers are facing. Click on the picture to see the full interview!



## STAFF RECEIVE TRAINING



Leadership staff as well as "Innovative Champions" from each branch received training which focused on leading with compassion and innovation. The instructor shared some insight on how to encourage staff to have an innovative mindset and helping them move forward and bring projects to completion.

## EDISON Y HOSTS FARMER'S MARKET

On August 29th, the Edison YMCA hosted the annual Farmer's Market Child Care Day, in conjunction with the Mobile Family Success Center, Edison Department of Health and Catholic Charities, NJ Hope & Healing Crisis Counseling Program.

Families that visited were able to select several pieces of seasonal, local produce, obtain free resources and information from vendors, participate in a craft project and enjoy some Rita's water ice.

*-Contributed by Cindy Shields*



## UPCOMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

October 27



December 15



January 26, 2022



# <bits & pieces>



Emma Latham, City Green School Grounds Manager and Harborview Early Learning Center children check on their tomato plants. Next, they will be planning seedlings of scallions, lettuce and beets for the fall season!



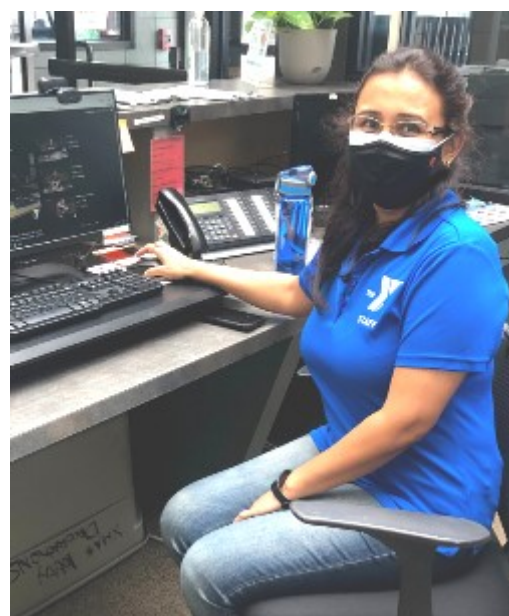
Rose Cushing, President & CEO presents check to Ryan Patterson Memorial Scholarship winner, Shreya Shivakumar



Having fun at the 5K!



Kindergarteners at Centenary settle into the new school year.



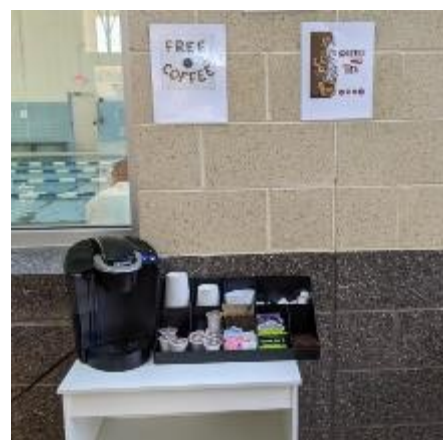
Poornima and all the staff from the Edison Y are excited to tell their members about the new YMCA360 virtual platform now available for free to our members!



Board members meet for the first time in person since March 2020!



South Amboy's SACC at the South Amboy Elementary School made their first of many weekly bus trips to the South Amboy for a Swim & Gym!



South Amboy invites their members to enjoy a complimentary cup of coffee or tea before or after their workout.



## TOGETHERHOOD UPDATE

The Y's **Togetherhood** efforts continued throughout the summer, focusing on our two key initiatives—support for New Jersey Blood Services and the First Presbyterian Church Food Pantry.

### New Jersey Blood Services – Blood Drives

Four drives have been held so far in 2021 and two more are on the calendar, the first on Sunday, October 24 and the second on Sunday, December 26. To date, 245 individuals have presented themselves as donors at our drives (an average of 61 potential donors per drive) and they have donated 228 units of whole blood (an average of 57 units per drive). These are very solid results, all the more so because two of our drives—in June and in August—had to be shortened due to excessive heat.

Metuchen Branch Board and **Togetherhood** Service Committee member Kathy Liss have taken the lead organizing our blood drives and a good number of veteran **Togetherhood** volunteers – plus a couple of new ones—have all pitched in to keep our Y's commitment to this initiative strong.

### First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen Food Pantry – Food Drives

Through August 31, 4,650 items and \$1,042 in cash have been brought to the food pantry.

In addition to the usual food and cash "Drop-offs" at the branch, this year we are also offering "Contactless Pick-Ups" and "Street Drives" as options for food donors. And—throughout July and August—we held our traditional *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation* drive, which yielded 1,041 items and \$85.

**Togetherhood** Service Committee members Rich Husar and his wife Kathy Higgins have been instrumental to the success of our food insecurity initiatives, and Rich did 99% of the food drive "heavy lifting" during July and August. With four months remaining in the year, we aim to build substantially on the foundation built throughout the first eight months of 2021.

-By Paul Edgcomb

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## CHILD CARE RECEIVES PNC FOUNDATION GRANT

The YMCA of MEWSA received notification of a \$7,500 grant from PNC's Grow Up Great Program to support the costs of professional development training for our Early Learning and Learning Centers teachers that will address protocols that have changed due to COVID-19. Training will revolve around social-emotional learning, introducing a trauma-informed approach to help children feel safe and supported during times of danger and adversity and provide a much-needed sense of safety and routine. The training will also offer workshops designed to educate our teachers on how to be responsive to our youngest students. Training will be provided through the Child Wellness Institute of New Jersey and a certified Child Therapist and Early Childhood Consultant.



We thank PNC Foundation for their continued support of our programs for our youngest children!

### IMPORTANT DATES

**Richard Hale Golf Outing**  
October 7

**Blood Drive @ Metuchen Y**  
October 24

**Halloween Spooktaculars**  
Oakcrest/South Amboy-October 29

**Annual Day of Gratitude**  
November 9

**Blood Drive @ Metuchen Y**  
December 26

**Halloween Not So Scary Party**  
October 30

# UPCOMING MEETINGS

## OCTOBER

- 1** PROPERTY COMMITTEE  
9:00 A.M.
- 6** BOARD GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
5:30 p.m.
- 12** FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
6:00 p.m.
- 14** DEI COMMITTEE  
6:00 p.m.
- 19** FINANCE COMMITTEE  
5:30 p.m.
- 27** BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING  
6:00 p.m.

## NOVEMBER

- 1** BOARD GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
5:30 p.m.
- 2** CHILD CARE COMMITTEE  
6:00 p.m.
- 3** PROPERTY COMMITTEE  
9:00 a.m.
- 9** DEI COMMITTEE  
6:00 p.m.
- 10** INVESTMENT COMMITTEE  
9:00 a.m.
- 14** FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
6:00 p.m.
- 14** SOUTH AMBOY BRANCH BOARD  
6:30 p.m.
- 15** METUCHEN BRANCH BOARD  
8:00 a.m.
- 17** IT COMMITTEE  
8:00 a.m.
- 20** EDISON BRANCH BOARD  
8:30 a.m.
- 21** FINANCE COMMITTEE  
5:30 p.m.



### MISSED AN ISSUE?

All Board newsletters can be found on the YMCA website at

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