STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY

Campaign Impact Stories
COUNTRYSIDE YMCA
Today, I’m a Fitness Instructor at Countryside Y. But 10 years ago, I was a poster child for why people need the Y.

At more than 280 lbs, I had a bad knee and was in poor health. The knee brought me to the Y; the Y’s awesome staff and programs took me to a better life. The Caring For Families Campaign made it all possible.

I got involved in several fitness classes and worked as a volunteer in various activities. It took lots of support and encouragement from the staff to maintain the discipline and hard work facing me.

Today, I weigh 200 lbs. The Y helped me change my whole lifestyle, not just my diet. I love working with the kids in the Kid Strive programs. For adults struggling with weight and an unhealthy lifestyle; well, I hope my Y experience helps motivate them to a better life, too.

Rich Williams
Thanks to the Caring for Families fund, I’ve been a Y member for nine years ago. It allows me to ‘earn’ my membership because of my limited income. Everyone has dreams and goals in life and my Y membership has allowed me to meet mine.

At 53, I started swim lessons. Four years later, I swam 2.5 miles non-stop. I began lifting weights, starting slowly. Since 2005, I’ve lifted more than 37 million pounds. With help from the Y staff, I’ve logged more than 200,000 cardio minutes.

I’ve had great success in the Senior Olympics, competing in swimming, track and field, and other events. I’ve earned state championships in swimming and track and Tri-State Championships in track. In June, I competed in the senior nationals, finishing seventh in the US in the 400, 800, and the 1,500-meter races.

The best part is sharing my accomplishments with the wonderful staff and members of Countryside YMCA. None of it would have been possible without the financial support I received from the Caring for Families program.

Robert Dippong

My husband and I are foster parents to five young brothers. I don’t think we could be the family these boys need if it weren’t for Countryside YMCA.

The boys came from an unhealthy and unsafe family situation, spending most of their days in their rooms—no toys, no books, no learning or healthy activities.

Thanks to Countryside YMCA, the boys have learned to swim and they participate in sports. Their Y experience has helped them make friends and learn about caring and trust.

Countryside’s Caring for Families Fund made it possible to enroll the two youngest boys at Countryside’s Children’s Center so I can continue working to help support us all.

Countryside has been so much more than a fitness facility for us. It’s been a place of refuge and a source of encouragement, providing hope for a better life.
BUILDING HEALTHY SPIRIT, MIND, AND BODY

Over the years, I had put on weight and I hated it. I didn’t think I could do anything about it and my cardiologist even laughed at my goal of losing 100 pounds. But one friend gave me the confidence to try.

A month later, I ended up at Countryside YMCA, and when I first walked in I could tell I was in the right place to begin my journey back to a healthy weight and good health. The Y’s Christian atmosphere and friendly staff were exactly what I needed to start working toward my goal.

After several months of exercising in the Y pool, I began working out in the Cardio Center where my personal trainer became a source of strength and encouragement.

I’ve since lost 60 pounds and I breathe and walk with greater ease. Best of all, at my last check-up my cardiologist said my heart is in great shape as well.

Overall, I am amazed at how much my life has changed. Family and friends have been supportive, but the Y has helped me change my life. I never intend to quit.
PROUD MOMENTS CREATE WINNING SPIRIT

My name is Hannah and I’m 8-years-old. When I saw the big sign about the triathlon, I said wanted to do it because it sounded like fun to me. Mom explained I would have to swim, bike and run one right after the other. I told her up was up to the challenge.

Mom and Dad figured out how far I had to run and ride my bike for the event. Swimming laps was really hard, but they reminded me that to do the triathlon, I would have to do all three activities. I pushed through and my times got faster and faster.

On race day, I was determined to finish even though I was the last one in my group to get out of the pool. As I rode my bike, I spotted my family cheering me on.

My Mom, dad, brother, aunt and both grandmas were waiting, watching and cheering as I crossed the finish line. They were hugging me and telling me how proud they were of me! We are so glad the Y started the Caring for Families program! If it weren’t for the financial support we receive from the Caring for Families fund, I would not have had this chance.

Hannah

TURNING HEALTH CONCERNS INTO HEALTHY LIVING

At first, fear drove me to jump into Countryside YMCA’s Power Waves Water Fitness Class.

Last summer, my surgeon said I needed to lose 50 pounds before he could perform the major surgery I needed to alleviate serious health problems. At that time, I decided to go to the Y and sign up for water fitness classes.

The results of that plunge and the encouragement I get from the Y staff and a “cheering section” of my class members keep me coming back.

I’ve now lost not 50, but 70+ pounds. My surgeon is impressed. He didn’t expect to be doing the surgery now, but I’m ready for it.

Health concerns got me to the Y, but the support, friendships, and results I’ve seen by working out at the Y will keep me coming back.
The YMCA has opened the doors to many with disabilities and given them the opportunity to be a part of what we “typical participants” take for granted every day. It is well known that exercise is a healthy decision that helps with stress, our physical well being, and mental attitude. Inclusion of disabled participants yields the same results as well as giving them the opportunity to make friends and become part of the community. Lastly, it benefits us all by better understanding that these individuals are people too. Yes they may look, speak, walk and communicate differently, but God has his purpose for them.

I have worked with the special needs population most of my adult life. I speak of my clients as friends, not people with disabilities as many in the community do. I would like to offer the example of one of my clients to illustrate the success of YMCA programs for the disabled:

I have been an Individual Provider for Regina for 18 years and the YMCA has given her a scholarship for the most of these years. Regina has made many friends, lost around 50 pounds, and has benefited so much from her association with the YMCA family. She has learned how to be appropriate in both conversations and actions and I have seen her become healthier in spirit, mind, and body. YMCA members have sent her cards (which is dear to her heart), given her gifts, and will sit and have a conversation without any initiation on my part. We have all had a part in educating Regina, but she has returned the favor ten-fold regarding increased awareness and understanding by YMCA members.

The successes of Regina have been repeated many times for other individuals with disabilities or special needs in our community. These individuals are all part of our Christian family as surely as if they were our children, brothers and sisters, and friends. Including and supporting these individuals in YMCA programs exemplifies the YMCA mission “to put Christian principles in practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.” Continuing the scholarship program for disabled individuals and considering expanded programs and classes is in line with the vision “To be the leader in creating community that builds better people.”

Sincerely,

Mo Stull