

A collection of Y stories -- "We are the difference makers"

#1 -- A letter from a Y Youth Soccer Coach for "Youth Sports for All"

The YMCA has helped to give me an opportunity to give back to the community through the Longmont YMCA's Youth Sports for All Program. Last spring was my second season as a coach.

This last soccer season was particularly special to me.

Francisco - a member of my soccer team has a true love for the game and very high skill level for the sport.

He has always been one of the first individuals in attendance at practice. From day one, Francisco has accepted and thrived in the leadership roles that I have placed upon him at practice.

There was something strange however about his behavior when it came to the actual games. He was never there. He was always the first one at practice, a leader, and a strong player, but was always a no show for the games and I couldn't figure out why.

I jokingly gave him a hard time one day at practice after a successful game we had. "Maybe we could have gotten a few more goals if Francisco was there." He smiled politely and went on playing.

After practice, I asked one of his best friends on the team in private, as to why he wasn't showing up for the games. He said, "Coach Jim - he doesn't have any shoes."

Francisco currently was wearing slip on dress shoes at practice and was apparently too embarrassed to come to games because of his lack of "soccer" shoes. After hearing this it broke my heart to know that he was missing out on a great opportunity simply because he could not afford the proper shoes.

I went to Francisco in private after practice one day and asked him if he had soccer shoes, would he show up for the games? He agreed, and I made him promise to be at the game with them on Saturday.

I held up my end of the bargain and brought him his soccer cleats; in return he hasn't missed a game since and has been a vital part of our success as a team.

I am happy to have helped Francisco. I am well aware that he, along with the rest of my team, would not have had a chance to play organized sports if it was not for the YMCA Youth Sports for All Program. I want to thank the YMCA for all that you do for the community and for the Youth Sports for All Program – it is making a difference in children's lives!

Thanks and God Bless,

A YMCA Coach

#2 – After School Gives Peyton Another Chance to Shine

I just wanted to take a minute to share what the YMCA daycare has meant to our family.

My two boys started at Imagine Charter School in the fall of 2008 after I had remarried and moved to Frederick with my new wife. This move was hard for my boys, in particular, my oldest, Peyton. The move created a geographical distance from their mother, which in a child's mind was very hard to deal with.

And without going into details of my divorce, I will just say that it was hard on my boys again, especially Peyton.

Peyton struggled with relationships and authority figures for a while, both in school and in the afterschool program. But through the YMCA program, with the tremendous patience and understanding of Natalie and Julie, we have all seen a tremendous change in the behaviors of the boys, mainly Peyton.

With lots of love and structure, Peyton has gone from being very reserved, cold and disrespectful to the wonderful, happy, loving young man that he used to be....and is again today.

Just in the last year, we have all watched his behavior and countenance change dramatically, and I owe so much to Natalie and Julie for being patient and understanding through this transition time.

Thanks to the YMCA and in particular, Natalie and Julie, for all your support and patience during the transition.

Ken Baldwin
Frederick, CO

#3 Two Boys Find Values and Their Way in YMCA Afterschool

Let's begin with the brothers Mario and Rodrigo.

Their father won custody when the mother lost her battle with drugs and alcohol. The boys resisted coming to Afterschool, but Dad insisted and for the first time in their lives, they had rules.

When they began misbehaving, Dad was at the end of his rope. But YMCA staff knew they had good boys in a difficult situation – and worked with the boys to live by YMCA core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

Over the course of the year, both became good Afterschool members.

#4 Rachel makes the grade in Preschool

Her mom wants to be a nurse. Rachel wants to go to preschool.

Her mom is studying anatomy and physiology. Rachel studies shapes and colors.

Her mom does homework on most weekends. Rachel asks “is it a school day”? And can’t wait til Monday.

Rachel Contreras is the youngest of five, and she is having the time of her life at full day YMCA preschool, the Early Years Center. A YMCA scholarship means she can attend five days a week,

Five days a week gives Rachel’s mom time to go to class, study and work.

Because Pam Contreras is a single mother with big dreams. Now Rachel has big dreams too -- which she nurtures every day at YMCA Preschool.

#5 Missing in Action: Stevie’s Smile

We hadn’t seen Stevie in over a year.

When he was last in the YMCA’s After School program, his mom was struggling to keep herself together and it was wearing on Stevie. Gone was the constant smile and eagerness to run and play. In their place were a pair of sad eyes and drooped shoulders that were heavy with burden of a family breaking apart.

This fall, Dad brought Stevie back to the YMCA.

“He’s been asking to go to the YMCA and I need to find a job to support my family,” said Dad. He explained that Mom had left earlier in the year. This had forced him to quit his gang activities and step up to be the man and father he always knew he could be.

Because of the YMCA scholarship program, Dad could afford to put Stevie back into the program he loves.

Dad found a job, but kept his scholarship so he could continue to provide his family with everything they need.

And Stevie’s smile is back! It looks just like his father’s.

#6 How Teresa Stays in the Swim of Things

Teresa loves to swim, more than anything. She's been doing it since she was six months old. Now 40, she comes to the Y twice a week and spends anywhere from 10 to 45 minutes in the pool doing, as her mother Connie puts it, "her own version of a dog paddle." Teresa's caregiver swims with her – for one on one support, and to communicate with other swimmers.

Because Teresa can't speak.

"She has a lot of challenges," says Connie, Teresa's mother. "Going to the Y is an important part of Teresa's routine. The front desk staff are so nice, and say hello. Socially, too, it's healthy. She needs to be around people."

Teresa's doctor has recommended swimming for the benefits of exercise, and for some arthritis.

Teresa's main financial support is Social Security. A scholarship to the Y makes it possible for her to afford her membership, and to keep doing what she loves – staying in the swim of things!

#7 Unemployed and Single Mother of Four – Can there be a greater challenge?

Angela is a single mother of four kids under 10. She has always worked hard to provide her kids with whatever they needed.

Like many single parents, she worked all day, picked her kids up from childcare, helped with homework, fed and bathed them, and sent them to bed. It was a demanding life, but it was hers.

Then she lost her job.

Angela was beside herself. She could no longer afford childcare, so she brought the kids home after school. None were old enough to be without an adult so she stayed home with them. But this cut into her time to search for another job. She was frantic.

Then she heard about the YMCA. It was a place her kids had always wanted to go, but never thought she could afford. But with a YMCA scholarship she found she could keep her kids in the after school program and spend her days job hunting and interviewing.

It didn't take long before Angela found a full time position. Her kids are safe and happy in the YMCA Afterschool program. And Angela is thrilled.

#8 She takes a dive into her fears, then comes back for more

As a child in Mexico, Eva Rodriguez never learned to swim. She started working at a young age and swimming simply wasn't a reality. After Eva moved to Colorado, she was invited to a YMCA swim class – Eva had never been in deep water before... she was terrified. Over time, YMCA Swim Instructors taught her when the pool was empty.

After age 40, Eva Rodriguez learned to swim.

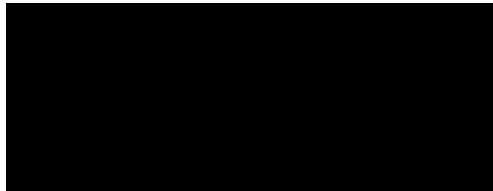
Today, with the assistance of scholarships, Eva swims 5 days a week at the Ed and Ruth Lehman YMCA in Longmont. In her last YMCA Swim Straight Challenge, she swam nearly 60 miles in 30 days. Eva taught us all to dive into our challenges and fears head first - all thanks to scholarships through donations from people like you.

We are the difference makers.

YMCA scholarships help local, low income kids stay healthy, strong and part of a sharing community.

Please make your gift today at

www.longmontymca.org



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