



CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

A Newsletter for Donors, Members, Volunteers and Friends of the Y • March 2023

Finding Support After Difficult Transitions

Erica and Gabe and their two children found the Y after a move to Eugene from the Bay area last summer.

"This was a time of big transitions," Erica says. "It was difficult moving to a new city. **We all started something new, and we left all of our friends and family and community.**"

Erica started a full-time doctoral program at the University of Oregon. Gabe started a new job. Their two elementary-age kids began 5th and 2nd grades in a brand-new school.

With Erica in graduate school, the couple also had a financial change.

"I learned that afterschool care for two kids would put us in the red every month," she says.

Erica was unsure how they would manage until she learned about **the Y's financial assistance program, which offered a 50-percent discount on child care** for Erica and Gabe.

"Financial assistance allows you to not focus on how you are going to make those payments every month," Erica says. "You can focus on your work, your home life and your kids. It also boosts morale,



Gabe, Birdie and Erica

so you also feel a part of a community that is there to support you."

That community support also helped her children transition to their new home. **When her daughter Birdie struggled with her behavior, Erica worked with site director Keeley to find a solution.**

Keeley created a special notebook that was decorated with stickers because Birdie loves to sketch. She filled a box with fun items for stress relief when Birdie needed a break. And she even

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Because of You...

Last year, the Y gave \$473,282 in financial assistance to 2,322 people for:

- child care
- summer camp
- facility memberships and more!

THANK YOU!

I'll Spot You: A Message of Gratitude

LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA was a reach for me. Being very overweight, in my late 60s, and having had cancer recently kick the stuffing out of me, I'm not your typical gym member. The banner over the front door says everybody belongs at the Y. That everybody includes me. Let's do this.

Then came yoga day. On the mat, on my knees, the pain became unbearable.

"Oh my god" I thought, "I'm going to cry!" But just before I did, LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA Coordinator Sally rushed to my side helping me up to my chair. **She was tuned in and knew I was at my breaking point.**

A couple classes later, we were given large exercise balls and told to lay back on them and walk our knees out front.

"Well, that's not going to happen," I said out loud knowing full well that's exactly how old ladies end up immobile!



Sally (right) with LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA participants and staff

But again Sally was at my side. **"I'll spot you."** And sure enough she did. I trusted her because she'd been there before for me. It worked great and **it felt fantastic to do something I thought I couldn't do.**

"I'll spot you." Those are some mighty powerful words. **I'll spot you means I believe you can do this. I'm here for you as you leave your**

comfort zone; I'm next to you as you push your limits; as you grow your confidence.

Thanks for spotting me, Sally. It meant the world to me.

—Colleen, LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA participant

LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA is generously sponsored by the Willamette Valley Cancer Institute

Putting the Y in Healthy Living

Susan, 68, completed her year-long participation in the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program in October.

She credits the program with setting her up to keep diabetes at bay: **she lost 30 pounds and her blood glucose level dropped.**

"I'm out of plus sizes!" she says about her clothing.

Both of Susan's parents had diabetes, and she noticed that her mother was slower to heal because of the disease. Her father suffered from cardiovascular issues.



"I didn't want to struggle with the same ailments," she says. "Even though I don't typically enjoy being in groups, I gave this group a try. **It was nice to be in a group—everyone had great ideas on how to cut fat out of my meals.**"

Susan feels confident that she will be able to continue preventing diabetes.

"This program helped me to follow the guidelines," she says. **"I got used to tracking my meals and now I don't need to use the tracker—I have changed my habits based on what I learned."**



Friendships, Community Formed at the Y

For decades, the Y has been a community hub and resource for Bernadette "Bern" Yap-Sam and her family.

Bern joined the Y in 2001 to slim down post-pregnancy. To her surprise, **she found much more than a place to get fit.**

"The people at the Y make it such a special place," says Bern. **"I like seeing the whole range of people at the Y. From little kids coming back from the pool smelling like chlorine to people visiting the Y because they have been displaced due to forest fires and need a shower, the Y is a reflection of Eugene and a real sense of community."**

When Bern first joined the Y, she relied on Y child care as a working mom. Her son Sam grew up in the Rainbow and Friends preschool rooms, spent summers in Y camp and even became a lifeguard with Y Associate Aquatics Director Victor in the Aquatics Center!

During her early years at the Y, Bern frequented after-work group exercise classes where she would work out alongside Y member Norma Grier. While taking classes together, their friendship blossomed.

"Friendships just develop in classes at the Y," says Norma. **"It's amazing! You get to celebrate people and share all the big life things that happen. My experience at the Y is that people are there for me and I've been able to be there for others."**

In 2021, Bern asked Norma to officiate her wedding in a friend's backyard.

"Norma is such a great person," says Bern. "I was convinced that someone else had asked her to marry them before."

In fact, officiating Bern's wedding was a first for Norma, who got ordained online so that she could legally perform the ceremony for her friend. "It gave me great joy to be a part of a ceremony that honors a relationship that brings Bern so much happiness," says Norma.



Now, two years later, Bern and her husband Michael are looking to purchase a house together, and **the Y is a central part of their search.**

"We've been looking for a place for 6 months now and we're being really picky," says Bern. **"One of our main criteria is that the house has to be within a 15-minute drive from the Y."**



That's because **she visits the Y at least 3 times a week, staying active and connecting with others.** She started practicing yoga with the Y's virtual classes during the pandemic, which helped her stay fit, toned and centered. She continues to take group exercise classes regularly and has just started to take up pickleball.

"Pickleball isn't about if you win or lose, it's just about having fun. I laugh with people of all ages and abilities who get up there and play." Norma, an active pickleball player herself, is looking forward to welcoming Bern into the pickleball community.

Throughout all phases of life, the Y has been a constant for Bern. **"It's my community—my second home,"** says Bern. **"I just think the people are wonderful and friendly."**

THIS IS Y.



Building What Matters

The construction for the new Y is on track and on budget. Here is a peek of what to expect this spring:

- **March 6:** The exterior walls will be completed for the main south face of the Y, which includes the youth corridor and the exterior walls around the 2nd floor's PeaceHealth Wellness Center
- **March 14–16:** Concrete slabs will be poured for the lap pool and the small pool
- **March 20:** Open web steel joists will be installed over the gymnasium
- **March 24:** Windows will be installed in the Aquatics Center
- **April 7:** Work begins to install the roof over the PeaceHealthWellness Center
- **April 17:** Windows will be installed for the preschools, administrative offices, community room and group exercise rooms



Y staff in the future Aquatics Center at the new Y



New Y site, facing north

February 2023



PeaceHealth recognizes the Y as a critical partner to connect health, medical and wellness services for our community members. A partnership like this is invaluable in its ability to reach, guide, inform and transform lives.

—Todd Salnas, Chief Executive for PeaceHealth Oregon

Topnotch child care and expanded opportunities for teenagers and STEM learning add up to a key quality-of-life piece in Eugene and throughout Oregon. I'm thrilled the Eugene YMCA has earned this significant federal investment for the working families it serves, and glad the teamwork with the Y, Senator Merkley and Congressman DeFazio has produced this successful result.

—U.S. Senator Ron Wyden

Exciting Fundraising Developments: \$3.25M in Funding Announced!

\$2M in federal funding — The Eugene Family YMCA celebrated the 2023 congressional omnibus appropriations package in December, which includes \$2 million in funding to the Capital Campaign for a new Y in recognition of its approaching ability to address family and youth needs. The new Y will double youth spaces allowing for expanded programming for teens, STEM learning, drop-in child care while families focus on their own fitness, and secure outdoor spaces with play equipment for curious, active youngsters.



Architectural Rendering, facing northeast

\$1.25M PeaceHealth Partnership — In a unique collaboration aimed at improving health outcomes in Lane County, the Eugene Family YMCA and PeaceHealth signed a 10-year contract to develop a suite of combined educational, wellness and health programming for youth, adults and families in the new facility. The partnership includes the naming of the new Y's Health & Wellness Center, which will be called the "PeaceHealth Wellness Center."

Middle School Madness Addresses Teen Programming Gap

Once a month, after the Y is closed to members, the Y is transformed into a gathering place for middle schoolers.

Hoots and hollers echo down the otherwise empty halls from rowdy games of basketball and dodgeball, splashes can be heard as kids cannonball into the pool's deep end and giggles from board game silliness float through the air.

Middle School Madness offers a safe and engaging space to an age-group that often lacks supervised, organized events, filling a critical gap in teen programming in Eugene. Parents say that in the wake of COVID-19, having a place for their kids to socialize and make new friends is more important than ever.



Peter, who attends Spencer Butte Middle School, doesn't play organized sports, so finding engaging social activities with kids his own age can be a challenge.

"I was surprised that he liked it so much because he can be kind of a homebody," says his mom, Linda.

Middle School Madness provides much needed social engagement for him. **His favorite activities to do at the event are roller blading**



in the gym, playing swimming games and doing puzzles.

Sky, an 8th grader at Cal Young Middle School, who has been attending Y camp since he was 5, also enjoys Middle School Madness.

He says, "There are fun activities and all sorts of great things to do there. I love going to hang out with my friends and to make new friends too."

"You should go, too!" Sky says to other middle school students.



Charlie, who is in 7th grade at Art and Technology, started going to Middle School Madness last year.

"I like playing basketball in the gym because it's really fun and the teachers sometimes play with you," says Charlie, who attends each month without school friends. **"Every time I go, I make new friends."**



**SPONSORING THE
EUGENE FAMILY YMCA**

In 2022, Because of You...

Critical support from donors, foundations and local organizations ensures that your Y continues to have a positive impact on our community.



The Youth Development department launched 7 new afterschool program sites for the 22-23 school year compared to the 21-22 school year.



Almost 300 summer campers learned confidence, achievement, belonging, and built relationships with other campers and Y staff over the course of 9 weeks.



Y fitness instructors offered 3,112 classes to 1,766 participants to promote strength, balance, health and wellness.



The Y provided \$329,288 in financial assistance for child care, creating opportunities for youth to grow and thrive with their peers.



Y swim instructors offered 718 swim lessons, teaching almost 400 youth, teenagers and adults critical water safety skills.



More than 1,300 kids played basketball and soccer through the Y's Youth Sports programs, learning sportsmanship, teamwork and coordination!

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worked with Birdie to produce a podcast together!

Erica says that Keeley's influence meant that Birdie had something to look forward to each day.

"Keeley went above and beyond to help my daughter. It was really touching to see the extra effort that was made," she says. "Keeley looks out for all of the kids in her care. She is a guardian, caretaker, educator and compassionate human."

Erica and Gabe feel secure knowing that they can turn to the Y for no-school days, summer camps and activities that will engage their children.

"The Y and its staff are there for the kids and the community," Erica says. **"I feel more confident knowing that this organization supports and cares deeply for families."**

From 'Absolute Zero' to Masters Swim Meets: Y Member Learns to Swim and Compete as an Adult

Chelsea Lovejoy, 33, started Y swim lessons in October 2021 for the first time in her life.

She had not been taught to swim as a child, despite growing up near water in San Diego.

"I was terrified of the water," she says. "I had a lot of shame not knowing how to swim as an adult."

Her first lessons with Chloe, a Y swim instructor for 6 years, were slow: learning how to put her face in the water, blowing bubbles and floating.

"We had to start from absolute zero," Chelsea says. "I had never even tried to swim before."

Chelsea's confidence grew every week as she mastered skills and continued to hear Chloe's encouragement and support.

"As a child, I missed out on a lot of the play that helps kids build confidence in the water," she says. **"Chloe made sure there was an element of play and laughter."**

At the beginning of a lesson or before a challenge, Chelsea and Chloe would stand in the shallow end of the pool and sing a catchy song that popped up on Chelsea's self-curated playlist.

"Sometimes, teaching adults can be harder because they have been fearful of the water for decades," Chloe says. "It helps break the ice if I can connect with them and help them find joy in the water."

That technique helped balance the challenging elements: the first time Chloe asked Chelsea to let go of the floating pool noodle, push off the wall in a

streamlined position and practice diving.



"Even though I was a gymnast and had good body awareness and position, it was scary to dive in headfirst," Chelsea recalls. "I made it a point to practice diving at the end of every practice. First, from sitting on the edge, then kneeling, then standing on the side and then, finally, off the starting blocks!"

Chloe taught Chelsea every stroke. After 9 months of swim lessons, Chelsea joined the masters (adult) swim team through Team Eugene Aquatics.

"Once I could swim all the strokes, I asked myself what is the next step? I was trying to decide if I should pursue swimming as a sport or lap swim on my own," Chelsea says. "What sealed the deal was that Team Eugene started a masters swim team practice at the Y. The Y is home for me. I feel comfortable here. It's where I learned to swim!"

Chelsea, forever pushing her limits, signed up for her first swim meet two months later!

"Chelsea is willing to try everything," Chloe says. "By the end, she knew all the strokes and I just wanted her to build stamina. I would give her sets and I would swim in the lane next to her."

Chelsea is signed up for the Y's 100-Mile Aqua Challenge to swim 100 miles this year. Chloe and the Y team will be cheering her on!



The 2022 100-Mile Aqua Challenge saw 56 water lovers log 4,693 miles swimming or aquajogging—improving their heart health, blood pressure and mental health.