MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Many Thanks . . . As you can tell from the contents of this newsletter, we have been very busy serving the Greater Hartford community. Our work has been supported, at every turn, by many loving, capable and committed individuals. Our staff works tirelessly and masterfully to provide a “hand-up” to those in need. Our volunteers provide never-ending support and expert guidance as we navigate these difficult times. Our work is not easy, but it is made easier by the “many hands” working to assure our success. What does success look like— it is a caring adult in the life of a child; a thoughtfully used resource; a child succeeding in school; an adult learning to read; and/or a family living healthier. Ours is an organization that lives by the adage: “Many hands make for light work.” I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to thank the many staff and volunteers who worked diligently to make possible the work in this newsletter. A very special thanks goes out to Dan Tracy, my first GHYMCA Board Chair, as he completes his term. Dan, you extended a hand and offered sound guidance at every turn - thank you!

GLASTONBURY ROTARY CLUB

On the evening of Monday, February 13th, James Morton presented the Y-USA’s “Branding” strategy and shared the vision of the YMCA of Greater Hartford at the Glastonbury Rotary Club. James stated, “The National YMCA brand allows us to communicate more clearly our impact, with a focus on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility”. James indicated that we needed to create a vision consistent with the new brand. After conferring with staff, volunteers and community leaders, our vision has become three fold:

• To put a caring adult in the presence of every child;
• To be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us; and
• To work, in partnership with others, to eliminate disparities in health and education.

WILSON-GRAY YOUTH PROGRAMS RECEIVE LOCAL SUPPORT

The Wilson-Gray YMCA Youth and Family Center recently received various grants and donations in support of its youth development programs. In February, Wilson-Gray, along with the Springfield YMCA, received $50,000 each from First Niagara in support of the YMCA Teen Incentive Program (Y-TIP).

Wilson-Gray also received a $5,000 donation from UIL Holdings Corporation to support the Youth Achievers Program, a program that helps youth envision a future that includes college and gainful participation in the global economy.

Bank of America also gave a $15,000 grant to Wilson-Gray’s youth development programs, which includes tutoring and homework assistance, mentoring, Achievers and Youth & Government.
AROUND THE Y...GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING EVERY DAY

CIGNA AND CT WHALE’S NEW "HOCKEY IN THE STREETS" PROGRAM KICKS OFF AT YMCA

In December, the East Hartford YMCA and the Wilson-Gray YMCA Youth and Family Center were among the first of a variety of venues to host Cigna’s “Hockey in the Streets” program. Cigna and Connecticut Whale teamed up to bring hockey to the streets of Hartford and area towns for boys and girls, ages 6 to 12 years.

Sponsored by The Cigna Foundation, the "Cigna Hockey in the Streets" leagues began with a series of Connecticut Whale clinics hosted by professional hockey players. There was also a Media Hockey Charity Challenge where $100 worth of turkey was donated in the name of Hartford’s Mayor, Pedro Segarra, to Food Share of Greater Hartford.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT THE Y

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”- Dr. Maya Angelou

The Downtown YMCA’s Footlights Performing Arts Program celebrated Black History through song, dance, and spoken word. The youth in attendance learned about the importance of education and what it takes to be successful from State Senator Eric D. Coleman and YMCA President & CEO James Morton. As we celebrate Black History Month, we are reminded to celebrate the accomplishments of the youth we serve, while encouraging them to take the necessary steps to reach their fullest potential.

WHEELER YMCA’S INDOOR TRIATHLON CLUB

"The Tri Club has introduced me to such a wonderful group!” said Miriam Correa a Tri Club veteran. “I never thought I would be doing triathlons or running. I didn't even want to join the Tri Club when I did, but I figure I would try something new. And I'm so glad I did. I'll never be a rock star swimmer, biker, or runner, but you guys make me feel like I am!”

The Wheeler YMCA’s Triathlon Club kicked off its 4th season with their first indoor triathlon of the year on Sunday January 29th. Racers swam a ¼ mile in the pool, biked 9 miles on the SPIN bikes and ran 2 miles on treadmills.

January’s male and female winners were Michael Mihalek, with a time of 41:43, and Alexa Styrczula, with an amazing 45:32.

Wheeler’s Triathlon Club started in 2008 with Stacia Cardillo acting as the clubs organizer. This non-competitive club draws in a large crowd of first timers each year. There are also several seasoned racers that use this club as a winter training tool to help them maintain their fitness level during the winter season.

WILSON-GRAY’S COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAY

On Sunday, January 29th, students from Greater Hartford gathered at the Wilson-Gray YMCA and received assistance with their FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) application. This annual program is known as College Goal Sunday.

Over 100 students and their families received financial aid counseling and got information regarding more than 200 scholarships and resources provided by the African-American Affairs Commission.

Throughout the day, College Goal Sunday volunteers helped students and their families feel at ease.
ASSOCIATION KICK-OFF

On January 4th, more than 100 people attended this year’s Strong Kids Campaign Kickoff at the Archdiocesan Center, Saint Thomas Seminary, and were inspired to reach our 2012 goal of $1,155,000. Our 2012 Campaign is co- chaired by Philip Kane, Jr. and Cheeneah Armstrong.

Emceed by Wheeler Board Member, Kathy Veronesi, the evening featured YMCA stories that ran the gamut from funny to inspirational, with many heartfelt tears throughout. The highlight of the evening was a song performed by Glastonbury Family Branch’s Youth Theater Group, which brought the crowd to its feet for a standing ovation. James Morton thanked everyone, in advance, for their 2012 efforts. The Campaign Celebration will be held March 29th at The Farmington Club.

COMPETING FOR A CAUSE

The teachers at the East Hartford YMCA Larson Center decided early on in this campaign season to speak with their families about the Strong Kids Campaign. Through this dialogue, they explained what the Strong Kids Campaign was all about. With the intent to get parents involved, the teachers decided to have a month-long competition to raise money for the campaign. All 30 Larson Center families were split up into teams, with each team being chaired by a teacher.

Each team decorated their own donation jars and got excited at the chance of raising money for their Y. With money being totaled from each team every day, parents became more and more engaged in making certain their team come in 1st place. There was even a friendly competition between a mom and dad who were trying to see who could raise the most money for their team.

After the month long campaign, the teams at the Larson Center raised a combined total of $500 toward the Strong Kids Campaign—a great result.

NO ONE TURNED AWAY

On January 23, 2012, the Farmington Valley YMCA received a check for $500 from Union Savings Bank to help provide scholarships to children interested in summer camp. These scholarships will help children grow into strong leaders because of the time they will spend this summer at the YMCA’s Camp Chase, an 88 acre day camp located in Burlington and serving the Farmington Valley region. All donations received by the Farmington Valley YMCA will go into their Strong Kids Campaign to ensure that no one is turned away from YMCA services and programs because of their inability to pay.

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BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

Thank you Philip & Cheeneah

BOARD MEMBER: Philip Kane Jr.

Philip Kane believes in the Y because of its overall mission to support families and the community at large.

Philip is the VP at US Bank National Association. He has been involved with the YMCA for 22 years - almost half of his life. As a member, Philip was asked by one of his “Y” friends to help in donating to what was known as the “Annual Sustaining Campaign”. Before he knew it, he was getting others to support the campaign and has continued to do so every since.

He believes the Y’s overall mission is to support families and the community at large.

BOARD MEMBER: Cheeneah Armstrong

Cheeneah Armstrong believes in the Y because of the experience she had with the YMCA in her hometown of Tulsa, OK when she was a child during the civil rights movement. The Y leadership in her neighborhood was dedicated to creating a safe community founded on access and equality.

Cheeneah is the Director of Ethics, Diversity, & Equal Employment Opportunities for Northeast Utilities in Berlin, CT. She has been a member of the YMCA’s Board of Directors for two years, along with supporting a multitude of other community organizations. She is a wonderful addition to our team.

Percentage of Goal Pledged (as of 3/15/2012)

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EMPLOYEES FROM THE HARTFORD PARTICIPATE IN A “PARALYMPIC EXPERIENCE” AT THE Y

The Hartford employees and members of the local community gathered at the Wilson-Gray YMCA Youth & Family Center to experience what it’s like to overcome a physical limitation to achieve success. On February 22, 2012, The Hartford employees participated in a Paralympic Experience, competing in a sitting volleyball competition led by U.S. Paralympic silver medalist Katie Holloway. This event was part of The Hartford’s Achieve Without Limits campaign. At the conclusion of the event, a $2,500 contribution was made to the Wilson-Gray YMCA’s Strong Kids Campaign, as part of The Hartford’s effort to support the communities where its employees live and work.

FOR THE LOVE OF TAYLOR

Shelly Garow, Program Director at Tri-Town YMCA shares how one staff member makes a difference...

I got a call from one of our favorite moms who has two boys who attend our programs.

Her older son has a medical condition that requires a little bit of “management” while he’s at the Y. Mom was calling me to chat about our current procedures and about a change that he had requested (actually, he told her about it, then asked her not to mention it to us, because “it wasn’t a big deal” - 3rd graders worry about stuff like that!)

While they were talking, her son mentioned specifically that he likes the way Mr. Taylor helps manage his care. It wasn’t a surprise to hear that - both of her boys LOVE Mr. Taylor, and were so excited a couple of months ago to hear that Mr. Taylor was going to be at Hanmer Elementary School every afternoon.

As we talked, I realized the impact of her son’s comments. He’s surrounded by grown-ups who want to help him stay safe and healthy, and I know that sometimes he feels a little “smothered” by the attention. But Mr. Taylor has figured a way to balance things.

PROJECT 217 ART DISPLAY

Camp Jewell staff shares her love of art...

Camp Jewell has set a goal of sending 217 campers to a session of summer camp. Project 217 is a quest to make this goal for their Strong Kids Campaign a reality. With the creation of Gallery 217 local artists have the opportunity to showcase their art free of charge at the Trading Post (camp’s store). Many of the pieces on display have been donated with all proceeds going directly to their Strong Kids Campaign.

A big “thank you” to Maggie, a program instructor and the brains behind Gallery 217; she found a way to simultaneously combine her love of art, cover the bare walls of the Trading Post, and support the Strong Kids Campaign.

AT THE HEART OF OUR CORE VALUES

A Y staff member shares how the core values of the YMCA are being implemented by alum....

Within the YMCA, the “core” (or CHoRR) values are a ubiquitous presence it seems. Our goal is to have each Woodstocker take the spirit, values and culture they experience at camp, and incorporate it into their interactions and experiences outside of camp.

We recently received a story from one of our alumni who teaches at an elementary school in a Massachusetts community facing several challenges. Joe Gugino, who attended and worked for Camp Woodstock, brought the spirit of camp and the values of the YMCA to his students and co-workers... “Core” skits included! With Joe’s facilitation, he and some co-workers came up with the acronym “HEART” for the school’s core values, and have begun the process of incorporating these values into every facet of their school day.