

YMCA CAPE COD CURRENTS



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCA CAPE COD

2245 Iyannough Road W. Barnstable MA

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A newsletter for Y members, volunteers and donors

HELPING YOU LIVE BETTER

I Hate Fresh Starts

By Saralee Perel

I said to my husband, Bob, "I start so many new things without sticking with them."

We were looking around the gym at our local YMCA on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. "This is horrifying," I said, as we passed the torture machines. "We're supposed to pay good money to put ourselves through this agony? That's like paying a dentist to stick a needle in our gums."

"We do."

"See? That's insane," I said. "AND LOOK AT THAT THING!"

"What?"

I pointed to the mirror. "They'll force us to look in that."

He ignored me. Denise, a gorgeous gal in charge, lovingly welcomed us as if we were family. She thought I was kidding when I said, "Where's the hot dog stand?"

"Bob, I'm not joining," I said later. "I'm tired of taking first steps."

"What's wrong with doing that?"

Now that was one heck of a good question. I've been thinking that taking another first step is equivalent to picking up a thousand pound boulder for the two hundred and twenty-seventh time – hard, heavy and depressing.

Actually it's the opposite. What's depressing is not starting something new. And really, what's the difference how many first steps I've already taken?

"Sweets," I said, filling out the application, "it's the YMCA. I'm neither young, male, nor Christian."

He grabbed the pen. "Then find the OWJA."

"Huh?"



Pictured: Saralee and Bob Perel in Wellness Center

"The Old Women's Jewish Association."

I took the pen and finished the form.

For me, the Y is not just a gym. It's a salvation.

What makes it extraordinary? The people who work there. Each one makes me feel that I mean the world to them, and that every notch I progress on a machine is an Olympic achievement, even when it's as tiny an increment as a wave moving only one inch closer to shore.

While I was exercising, a fitness trainer named Louise, who's too modest to think of herself as the remarkable inspiration she is, asked, "Has this helped?" She was referring to my spinal cord injury but I pointed to my head and said, "It's helped up here."

I often say, "I can't bring myself to do this." But Louise has taught me that it's what I do in spite of that thought that matters. The harder it is to motivate myself to get dressed and go, the greater the accomplishment of getting there.

The people at the Y are not determined to make me exercise; they're determined to help me be happy and loving, to myself and others.

I have faith in the team. I have faith in looking at only one moment without overwhelming myself with the whole picture. I have faith in first steps, even if I've tried the same ones before. But most of all, I've found new faith in myself.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

Nationally syndicated award-winning columnist, Saralee Perel, can be reached at sperel@saraleeperel.com or via her website: www.saraleeperel.com.

MORE THAN A MEAL

Feeding the soul through the Home Delivered Meals Program (HDM)

By Michele O'Brien, Home Delivered Meals Coordinator

Last spring Tess walked through the doors of the YMCA Cape Cod looking for some relief from the stress she was experiencing at home. A mother to three small girls, she was out of work, and her husband a local contractor had been injured and was on disability while recuperating. She was tired and looking for some way to find a little "me" time.

That day Tess learned a lot about the Y, most importantly that no one is ever turned away because they cannot afford programs. Tess completed the financial assistance application and became a Y member. Tess was also one of the first families to sign up for the Home Delivered Meals program (HDM).

Tess was able to enjoy time working out and focusing on herself while her daughters were cared for in Child Watch, and enjoy time as a family by taking advantage of family swim. Most importantly her children received two healthy meals a day from the HDM program, helping to take some of the financial strain off the family.

At the end of the summer Tess let the Y know that she had secured a long term substitute teaching job at a local elementary school and her husband was back to work. She thanked the Y for the HDM meals and the support they received while getting back on their feet.



Pictured: Katie O'Brien, delivering meals.

DEEPER THAN A POOL

Pain management through water exercise classes bring peace to a Y member.

By Roxanne Craft, Director of Membership

The YMCA has been impacting the community long before the West Barnstable facility was built. Cathy's first YMCA experience began when she brought her children to the Hyannis Inn where they participated in youth swimming lessons about 30 years ago. This was just the beginning of Cathy's relationship with the Y. Along with suffering from severe arthritis, fourteen years ago Cathy had a stroke that left her wheelchair bound. She came to the Y to find out what aquatics programs she could participate in and joined the arthritis class. For the last fourteen years Cathy has participated in multiple aquatics programs and has progressed from classes in the small pool to the main pool. "It became very clear to me that being in the water was the only way to move. The amount of freedom is stunning, absolutely stunning", said Cathy. Living on a fixed income, it was difficult paying for the classes Cathy so desperately needed. The Y provided Cathy with financial assistance for all of her aquatics classes and today, with the help of her friend and aide James, Cathy participates in classes three days a week for two hours a day. Cathy explained "The less you move the worse it gets and if I did not participate in these classes I would be riddled with arthritis and completely miserable. It helps with motivation and depression. Coming to the Y gives my week meaning."

Along with the physical benefits of participating in Y programs, Cathy and James love coming to the Y because they feel at peace here. "This is our happy place. We are surrounded by so much negativity in the world and it is a relief to know that we are coming to a positive place where we have so many people that care. The Y is like extended family," said James.



Pictured: Cathy and James at the YMCA Cape Cod.

Cathy and James are so grateful for all the Y does for them and the community as a whole. Cathy and James often volunteer on the pool deck, cleaning and painting and care for a beautiful tree they gave the Y that resides in the pool lobby. James and Cathy are compelled to give back to the Y in any way they can. Although funds are tight they donate to the Annual Support Campaign so others can have the same great experience and feel a part of something amazing. Cathy is at home at the Y and explained "I cannot imagine how my life would be without the YMCA Cape Cod."

S'MORE SUMMER FUN

Standing on the shoulders of giants - one camper's story

By Thomas Busby, Director - Youth Development

"What did you do today?"

This was the question my Dad asked me everyday after I got home from camp. Hoping to hear me reminisce about learning to manage a sailboat or understand compass navigation, I tried my best to make listening to my counselor play guitar or meeting new friends seem as important as learning to tie an Anchor Hitch knot. I usually ended with, 'Camp is awesome.' The fact of the matter was that going to Camp was my absolute favorite thing in the entire world- and starting the first day of school I began counting down the days until I could return to face-painting and gimp, dodge-ball and rock-climbing, and all of my friends. I

reveled in the idea that at camp you could be everything that you were- you didn't "just" have to be the kid into basketball, or theater, or archery. At camp, I felt like I could be a little artsy, a little athletic, and everything in between. And the people who introduced me to these wonderful things were unlike anyone I had ever met. They weren't my teachers, they weren't my parents, they weren't even like coaches; they were camp counselors and camp directors, and they were the most inspiring and wonderful people I had ever met. They taught me that life is meant to be fun and adventurous. That life was "easier with friends." They showed me that happiness and helping each other was more important than anything else.

"How's work going?"

This is the question I now get from my Dad. And as the Camp Director at YMCA Camp Lyndon I still get to answer, "Camp is awesome." As a child and teenager who had his first camp experience, first job experience, and now has his career housed in the same 78 acres, I feel truly blessed to care for the camp that impacted me on such a monumental level. To be able to still work under the Camp Directors that saw me grow from a boy, to an adolescent, and now adult, I carry a sense of duty and responsibility I never dreamed of. It is uniquely humbling and motivating to have the children of my former camp directors come to the camp their fathers once cared for, and aspire to be the leaders I remember their father's were and continue to be.

Now, to see my own former campers move through the ranks of camper to CIT and full fledged staff members I know that we are carrying on a tradition and philosophy that began many, many generations ago. Today, at YMCA Camp Lyndon, we are proud to be "standing on the shoulders of giants." Myself included.



Pictured: Campers roasting marshmallows.

ENSURING BRIGHTER FUTURES

A letter of thanks to Denise Graham-Reardon, Child Care

By a YMCA Cape Cod Member and Financial Aid Recipient

Dear Denise,

I am writing today to express my most sincere gratitude for all you and the YMCA have done for my daughter Kaitlyn* and our family. We are in the midst of a very challenging time period including financial and emotional stress. As you know, Kaitlyn's twin brother Jack has autism and it is a disorder that can be difficult to manage. Without the YMCA, and Kaitlyn's wonderful teachers, Kaitlyn would have to stay home. At home my husband and I are under tremendous stress trying to secure jobs. Also, Kaitlyn's brother can become very aggressive and often attacks her for no reason. We are trying to manage his behavior with the help of his school and doctors. However, it is very upsetting to be around and extremely dysfunctional at the moment. We are working very hard as a family to try to resolve these issues and improve on them.

Without the generosity of the YMCA and the preschool Kaitlyn would suffer in terms of her well-being. She is such a special, bright and loving child and we want to keep her that way! She loves her "Y" as she calls it and talks about her teachers and her friends all the time. She can't wait to go to school everyday and asks first thing in the morning, "Is it school today?" Her teachers have gone out of their way to welcome her and make her feel special. They have helped her to be proud of her brother and encouraged those



Pictured: Denise with Children's Crossing classmates.

good feelings toward her sibling. Her self-esteem has blossomed and she is always happy and proud after a day at school thanks to her kind teachers.

Words cannot express our humble gratitude. Eventually, when we are financially back on our feet, we will not forget and would like to give back in any way we can. For now, the preschool is a lifesaver for us and especially Kaitlyn. Thank you so very much.

Sincerely,
A Very Grateful Y Family

*the names in this letter have been changed for the family's privacy



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Learn more about YMCA Cape Cod and our
community impact.

Currents is the YMCA Cape Cod's development newsletter, designed to keep you informed of the Y's development efforts and the lasting positive impact being made in our community. - Stacie Peugh, President & CEO YMCA Cape Cod

