OUR SHARED VALUES: INTEGRAL TO EVERY STORY

Responsibility
Caring
Respect
Inclusiveness
Honesty
Health
Each year, I am so proud to present the Gratitude Report, and fascinated to discover that each of you have your own unique reasons for giving—so evident in your stories.

It’s also evident that our donors—as diverse as the people we serve—share some common characteristics: first, you are generous; second, your stories reflect our shared values; third, you are vital partners in fulfilling our mission to make the GTA home to the healthiest children, teens and young adults.

I am so grateful the YMCA of Greater Toronto is home to such caring, committed donors—a place where philanthropy thrives.

Thank you for your extraordinary support.

Yours, in gratitude,

Medhat Mahdy, President & CEO
"I work for a doctor and I’ve seen first-hand how not being healthy can affect a person. For example, I’ve seen someone struggle after having a leg amputated because of diabetes.

My own personal struggle was being overweight.

But all that changed for me when my family joined the Scarborough Y two years ago. Since then, I’ve lost 50 pounds and kept it off. It’s hard for me to describe how much better I feel—not only physically, but emotionally too.

The Y also changed my son Michael’s life. After being bullied at school nearly broke his spirit (not to mention my heart!), we decided to enroll him in one-on-one swimming lessons and group karate. The instructors were so welcoming, reassuring and respectful toward Michael. Gradually, he not only regained his self-confidence and enthusiasm for life, but he has also excelled in both sports and made some great new friends!

My husband loves using the track as often as he can to power walk or run, I love going to my dance classes several times a week and the three of us go together every weekend for our own Family Fitness Saturday.

As a family, since joining the Y we are happier, healthier and stronger. It truly changed our lives!

We are so grateful, not only for what joining the Y has meant for our family, but for what it means for our community. We were New Canadians at one point in our lives, and when I see how diversity is embraced and championed at the Y, it warms my heart. The GTA can be a cold and lonely place to a newcomer, but not at the Y.

Which is why I feel proud to be a Y member, but even more proud to be a Y donor. I made my first donation to the Y because of the impact it’s had on my family. I know I’m not only investing in the ongoing health of my family…but the health of my community too.
At every YMCA Health & Fitness centre, one in four members benefits from financial assistance. Gifts from donors like Michelle mean that families can access the programs they need to support physical, social and mental health. And they are a way for members like Michelle to say “thank you” for all of the support that her family has received on their own journey to becoming healthier!

EUGENE, MICHAEL & MICHELLE MILLENA
Members and first-time donors, Scarborough YMCA Centre
Our community is situated along Mutual Street, in the heart of Toronto's Rainbow Village. Each June, as Pride celebrates diversity and inclusion, Radio City staff and residents come together to raise funds for our charity of choice: YMCA Sprott House, which provides much-needed support, resources and shelter for LGBTQ2S youth.

With generous contributions from local restaurants and shops, we host a Pride Social for neighbours and residents in our outdoor courtyard, and we donate the proceeds to YMCA Sprott House.

Things have come a long way in terms of embracing and respecting diversity. We're not there yet, but we believe that the Y and Sprott House are leading the way.

Since many of us are LGBTQ2S and of a certain age, it is meaningful to us to support a program that we wish could have existed decades ago. We know all too well about the stigma, marginalization and prejudice that LGBTQ2S people experience.

We've been hosting our Pride Social for two years, and plan to continue for many years to come. Supporting Sprott House means we are making a tangible difference in the LGBTQ2S community—one with which we strongly identify. We want LGBTQ2S youth in Toronto to know there's a place they can go when they have nowhere else to turn.”
Janet Johnson Dawson—one of the YMCAGTA’s longest serving employees—recently retired after 32 years. Her career began in child care and summer camps and later evolved into various management roles in Health & Fitness at the Scarborough, Brampton, North York and Mississauga Ys.

In 2001, through the Brampton Y’s connections with the local Board of Trade and Rotary Club, mutual friends introduced Janet to Bryan Dawson, who has worn many community hats (such as Chairman of the Board at Sheridan College, President of the Brampton Board of Trade, and a member of the Brampton Y’s Volunteer Development Committee—to name just a few). Now married for 13 years, the story of this family’s steadfast generosity and commitment to the Y—and their community—merits a book all its own.

In addition to Janet’s distinguished service as a YMCA employee, Bryan was chosen in 2010 as the Y Volunteer of the Year, in recognition of his generosity sharing his time and talent.

But their story doesn’t end there. To mark their retirement, Bryan and Janet made a $100,000 donation. Here, they share what drives their passion.

Janet describes the joy she and Bryan experience when they can clarify the misperception that many people initially have about what the Y does in addition to gym and swim. “When Medhat invited Bryan to lend his strategic expertise to the management team, he came up with a great slogan—‘the Y, while well known, is not known well.’” Bryan proudly adds that even though Janet is now retired, she’s just a phone call away if her many former Y colleagues have questions. “Janet loves it when someone wants to pick her brain.”

This dynamic duo also shares the connector gene. Janet explains: “We love networking for golf tournaments and fundraising for Megathons. Between the two of us, we can always recruit a foursome or open a door.”

As lifetime members and donors, Janet and Bryan are perpetuating their incredible legacy of honesty, caring, respect and responsibility with their next generation; their grandchildren take swimming lessons at the Markham YMCA Centre and attend Before & After School Programs and summer camps.

“We share a deep understanding and respect for the Y’s mission; we’ve seen it in action throughout all the program offerings over many years. I guess you could say that Bryan and I also feel a shared responsibility to do whatever is in our power to help the Y fulfill that mission and make the GTA home to the healthiest children, teens and families.”

Once you make a connection to the Y, it never leaves you. It just gets stronger.”
Meghan Robertson and her brothers were camp kids. And like most camp kids, when Meghan grew up, she wanted her own children to benefit from the camp experience.

“If you’ve never been to camp…you just don’t understand. I’m sure someone, somewhere, has unpleasant memories of camp, but I’ve never met them!”

Meghan’s daughter Annie started at YMCA Camp Pine Crest (the Y’s overnight camp in Muskoka) with her best friend when she was just 9 years old and continued going every summer—eventually becoming a staff member. This helped shape the person she is today.

Camp Pine Crest isn’t the only way that the Robertson family connects to the YMCA. “I’m a member of our local Y in Scarborough,” Annie explains. “I find going there very uplifting because it’s such a welcoming, warm microcosm of our city. I’m sure everyone you talk to says the same thing—that the Y embraces diversity. That’s because it’s true.”

Giving, caring, respect and responsibility have always been cornerstones of the Robertson family’s values. Meghan recalls, “We support social services, education and health charities because those are the causes that are closest to our hearts—they help young people learn life skills and become healthy, well rounded young adults before they lose their way.”

With both of their daughters now grown, the Robertson family wanted to do something different for Christmas. As a family, they thought about the values that make them who they are, and how they wanted to demonstrate their generosity. That’s why, instead of buying Christmas gifts, they decided to help other children experience the magic of Camp Pine Crest.

Meghan recalls, “It was a pretty easy decision for our family. None of us really need another darn thing. But thinking about other parents and children who are struggling breaks my heart. So, we gave to Pine Crest and it felt fantastic! I’m going to advocate that it become our annual family tradition.”

Annie is now building on the confidence, curiosity and sense of possibility that she developed at Pine Crest by setting her sights on a new adventure: a Master’s in Journalism at the University of British Columbia. No doubt her Y values and spirit of generosity will remain with her wherever she goes.

“Like Mom, I can’t really say enough about camp. I’m really glad we chose Pine Crest. I would not be the person I am today if I hadn’t gone there. Because of Pine Crest, I’ll support the Y for the rest of my life.”

– Annie Robertson
Melissa has worked at the Y since she graduated College in 2009. She started out part-time, but now can’t imagine working anywhere else.

“I have great respect and loyalty for the Y because it’s been possible for me to learn skills, gain experience and progress in what has been a really rewarding career—helping young people take control of their lives and reach their full potential.”

Melissa has been a donor ever since she became a Y employee and says, “It wasn’t too hard to convince my dad (a retired TTC worker) to become a regular donor too.”

Pasquale Schettino is very proud of his daughter and says it’s obvious how much she loves working at the Vanauley Street YMCA.

“Before I retired, I could have walked to visit Melissa on my breaks. But I never wanted to interrupt her. So, I was very satisfied being a donor and knowing my donations were...in a small, but consistent way...helping Melissa with her important work.”

When Melissa got married, she and her husband-to-be decided to make a charitable donation in lieu of wedding favours.

Melissa says, “We both made a list of the charities we thought deserved our support, and there were several we were considering. But in the end, we decided on the Vanauley Y. Because I work there, I know how the donations are used...and we could always suggest where the funds could go, like taking the youth to see a movie or a field trip to somewhere like the ROM or the CNE. It was a real honour for both me and my husband support my work—in a special way on our special day.”

Melissa’s 5-year-old nephew attends the Before & After School Program at the Bolton St. Nicolas YMCA. “At first, my sister was a bit unsure and nervous about leaving her son anywhere. But after I assured her that the Y’s stringent screening and hiring criteria was second to none, she trusted my recommendation and signed him up. Now I don’t know who loves it more—my nephew or his mom! That’s another reason my dad is a regular Y donor.”

Pasquale adds, “Not only does one daughter work at the Y...the Bolton St. Nicolas YMCA takes such great care of my grandson...I can’t think of two better reasons to support a charity!’

Melissa concludes, “To me, being a Y donor shows my faith, trust and pride in my employer. There’s no way I’d work at a place I wouldn’t be proud to support with my own money. And needless to say, there’s no way I’d recommend a charity to my dad that I didn’t support myself.”
The Vanauley Street YMCA is a 40-bed youth shelter. Thanks in part to donors like Melissa and Pasquale, homeless and street involved youth can walk through Vanauley’s doors whenever they’re in need of safety or support. In fact, over 10,000 youth did just that last year.
The Longboat Roadrunners is a 150-member GTA running club that promotes sportsmanship, individual and team excellence, competition, camaraderie and commitment. Members range in age from 18 to 83 years, and their abilities vary just as widely. Michael Moran, Communications Coordinator for the club, explains the club’s name and its connection to the Y:

Tom Longboat, the club’s namesake, was an Indigenous Canadian runner who became a household name in 1907 after winning the Boston Marathon and representing Canada in the 1908 Olympics. Tom trained at the Great Hall in Toronto’s west end—home of the original West End YMCA.

Our connection to the Y began ten years ago, when we were searching for space to change into our running gear and safely store our street clothes before our Sunday run. Given the connection to Tom Longboat, the West End Y—now located at College and Dovercourt—seemed like a good place for us to start. They’ve been welcoming and accommodating to the Roadrunners ever since, and we reciprocate by making a generous leadership donation.

The Y’s values really dovetail with our club values, which are all about inclusiveness, respect and acceptance, not to mention health. When I'm not running, I’m a City of Toronto paramedic and I can tell you, when people ask me how I keep my head on straight, the answer is fitness.

You can go to any gym to get exercise…but when you go to the Y, you get well.

Supporting each other regardless of ability is an example of how Y values mirror Roadrunner values. The Y helps us have a good Sunday run, and we help make it possible for kids to go to camp, learn to swim or get fit. Talk about a win/win!

Donors and partners like The Longboat Roadrunners are creating more spaces at YMCAs across the GTA, for families just like this one: “The Y is where our kids learned to swim, experienced overnight camp and began to grow up. All kids should be able to count on a place like this.”

– YMCA member
Brampton Y Aquatic Supervisor Tamar Connell has good reason to be proud of the Brampton Barracudas Junior Lifeguard Club. They’re not only learning how to save lives; they’re learning how giving back will help more kids experience the Y.

The Brampton Barracudas are a group of 120 Junior Lifeguards aged 5 to 16 years. They’re garnering a reputation for excellence in lifeguarding and competitive swimming, as well as for finding creative ways to support their Y. And their passion for fundraising has inspired their parents, family members and friends to dive in and help in any way they can!

Two Great Lakes Swim Megathon fundraisers involved swimming laps equal to the distance from shore to shore of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Each Barracuda was charged with asking people to sponsor them for each lap they completed. They raised more than $10,000 in total.

Tamar recalls that Scott, a first-time lap swimmer, was discouraged that he had only raised $20. “He was a bit shy about asking people to sponsor him. Then we saw one of his teachers in the pool one day and I encouraged him to approach her. I wish you could have seen the look on Scott’s face when that teacher said yes. He went on to raise a lot more than $20!”

“The Barracudas genuinely care and feel a shared responsibility to ensure other kids have the same opportunities to join, learn and belong as they’ve had”, says Tamar. “They embody inclusiveness because they really do come from all walks of life, but you’d never know it. Whether they’re practicing, competing or fundraising, they’re one for all and all for one.”

Megathon is the YMCA of Greater Toronto’s largest annual fundraiser, with over 50 events held across nine Health & Fitness Centres. Members and friends pledge their support for the fitness challenges set by our Mega Champions and help to ensure that the YMCA can be accessible to all.
STEVE AND SHARON RANSON—MAJOR STRONG START, GREAT FUTURE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONORS AND CAMPAIGN CABINET MEMBERS—are passionate about building inclusive communities that foster healthy, active lives and support young people as they navigate their way through critical life transitions and challenges. As parents of two young adults, Sharon and Steve believe that health, wellbeing and a place to belong are essential components for children, teens and families to thrive and flourish. Their significant investment in the Strong Start, Great Future campaign will help create even more capacity to build vibrant, inclusive neighbourhoods through the creation of new Centres of Community across the GTA.

“Although neither of us grew up in Toronto, we are proud to call Toronto home and have always strongly believed in sharing our time, talent and treasure with our community. For us, the Y embodies and represents the things we love most about Toronto: diversity, inclusiveness and opportunity—no matter who you are, where you come from or how you identify yourself. Rich or poor, young or old, straight, gay, transgender or anything in between, the Y opens its doors and its arms to you.”

There are four things that set the Y apart from other charities for Steve and Sharon, that moved and inspired them to give their support:

1. **Good health makes all the difference in life**—we think the Y’s philosophy about using health to build community is brilliant

2. **Accessibility is for everyone**, no matter what their income

3. **The Y welcomes and embraces newcomers to Canada**. They have resources and programs specifically designed to help newcomers and refugees assimilate and feel they belong

4. **The Y is there for LGBTQ2S youth**—once again with open doors, open arms and open hearts for youth who might not have the love and support of their families

Sharon and Steve love that they both feel inspired about the Y mission and that they can work together to support this wide-ranging charity. And they also feel that the Y’s core values align with their own:

“We’ve observed that these values are at the heart of everything the Y does…from organizational culture to prudent stewardship of funds to professional management of every aspect of programs and services. We’ve been rewarded by seeing the impact of our donations—how our support has created value. We have seen first-hand how the Y can help people reach their full potential and that’s why we believe in the Y.”

“We’ve invested in the Strong Start, Great Future campaign because we envision that these state-of-the-art Centres of Community across the GTA will excel at strengthening and enriching the fabric of our community—through health, inclusiveness and caring. We’ve visited a number of YMCAs including the newer Vanauley Street and Cooper Koo YMCAs, so we know that the opening of each new facility means unprecedented opportunities for children, teens, families, seniors and newcomers to be the best they can be.”
STEVE AND SHARON RANSON
Strong Start, Great Future
Capital Campaign Donors
Every year, over 1,000 YMCA staff members donate to support their colleagues in building healthier, stronger, more connected communities through the YMCA Family Gives campaign. Tamim Hamidi and Salima Visram, Employment Centre campaign leads at the Milner Business Court and Finch Avenue locations in Scarborough, have both been involved since they began working for the Y. Here’s why:

“We both truly believe in the Y’s mission, vision and values.”

Salima recalls, “When my kids were at the Y child care, I saw with my own eyes how our giving helped children to fully participate in the programs. Without that support from donors, some kids would miss out on the fun part of learning.”

Tamim remembers, “When I first started working on the campaign as a new employee, I wondered how we’d ever raise so much money. But everyone supported the campaign without a second thought and in a month we’d surpassed our goal. That really surprised me!”

Tamim and Salima both agree that “all the Y values are tied into the campaign, but ‘Caring’ is the one that stands out. “Every year when we launch the campaign, we’re amazed by all the positive support. Our staff and volunteers prove year in and year out that it’s not only about working for the Y…it’s also about caring for each other.”
Always endeavouring to come up with new ideas that engage and inspire participation, Salima and Tamim agree that last year’s YMCA T-Shirt Fashion Show was one their biggest successes. “We showcased YMCA t-shirts from the 1990s to present and used the various vintage t-shirts to promote the campaign. I think it was really a hoot for everyone to see how the campaign names changed over time. And all our fashion models were staff!”

Salima concludes, “I think I can speak for both of us when I say that when we give to our employer, we are sending a message about pride in our leadership and pride in our Association. Why would anyone work for a charity they wouldn’t want to support?”

Family Gives Campaign leads at YMCA Employment Centres across the GTA celebrate their commitment to Y values and demonstrate their leadership by encouraging others to join them in donating.
Together with our community, we have set a bold and ambitious vision to build new YMCA Centres of Community across the Greater Toronto Area.

Donors are central to the realization of this vision and many generous individuals have already been inspired to step forward and pledge their support. Thank you!

Each new Centre will be purpose-built to meet the needs of the neighborhood in which it is situated, and will offer a cross section of programs and services for children, teens, young adults and families. Visit ymcagta.org to learn about the Centres already complete and those in development.

Community Health Monitoring

To complement our ambitious expansion plans, we have developed a Community Health Monitoring strategy, rooted in the social determinants of health. Our aim is to improve our understanding of:

● the current health of residents of the GTA and how health may be changing over time in order to better understand progress toward achieving the YMCA’s strategic vision that “our communities are home to the healthiest children, teens and young adults.”

● the contribution that YMCA programs and services make to the health of members, clients and other residents of the neighbourhoods we serve to better understand our social impact.

● the current reach of YMCA services relative to health needs to inform decisions about current and future programming and location of facilities.

Cooper Koo Family YMCA  Vanauley Street YMCA  Kingston Road YMCA**
Prior to selecting a neighbourhood for a new YMCA development, we complete primary research to assess the current health status and needs of the community to determine whether it has a need for YMCA services.

Almost one year following the opening of the Cooper Koo Family YMCA, we also conducted a telephone survey of residents living within a 3km radius. Results indicate that this new YMCA appears to be located where the community needs us most, with residents within a 1km radius scoring lower on key health indicators than those 2–3 kms away.

With our Community Health Monitoring Strategy now in place, we are well positioned to report on and evaluate the impact of the Cooper Koo Family YMCA and our other new YMCAs on the health and wellbeing of their communities over time.

**Cooper Koo YMCA: Select Key Health Indicators**

Volunteering  Drinking*  Social support

Life satisfaction  Mental health  Smoking*

Sense of belonging  Self-esteem  Stress

Fruit and vegetable consumption  Self-efficacy

* Residents in a 1km radius scored lower on these key health indicators

**McDonald Family YMCA**

**Vaughan Metropolitan Centre YMCA**

**Artist renderings are subject to change.**
Each and every gift to the YMCA is cherished and deeply appreciated. Individuals and families stand together with foundations and with corporate partners to make our circle of giving as strong as it can be.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is accredited by Imagine Canada’s Standards Program for excellence in accountability, transparency, and good governance.

The Standards Program Trustmark is a mark of Imagine Canada, used under licence by the YMCA of Greater Toronto.
Thank you for entrusting us with your gift. We work to ensure that every gift is used to lift up individuals and families. Your gifts allow us to create space in our circle for anyone who needs us.

**2016/17 Total Contributions: $5.2M**
Mission
The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a charity offering opportunities for personal growth, community involvement and leadership.

Vision
Our communities will be home to the healthiest children, teens and young adults.

Values
The YMCA of Greater Toronto is guided by values that influence our actions and the decisions we make: Caring, Health, Honesty, Inclusiveness, Respect and Responsibility.

We are so grateful to every one of our donors. Thank you for your generous support!
If you’d like to share what inspires you to give to the YMCA, we would love to hear from you!
Email us at giving@ymcagta.org or call us at 416-928-3362 x22584