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AS SEEN IN TIME

YMCA

BUILDING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES ONE PERSON AT A TIME

YMCA ACTIVATING AMERICA

profile: Jeanne Hensler

Jeanne Hensler is a 63-year-old grandmother whose arthritis prompted her to join the YMCA of Greater Seattle and participate in its programs. She says, "Little did I know how it would change my thinking, my habits and my outlook on health and fitness. My weight started to drop and after five months I had shed 30 pounds. My body image totally changed. I'm still a gray-haired, bespectacled granny with a few extra pounds, but I feel energetic, successful at maintaining my weight, able to lose a few pounds if I choose and confident I can meet any challenge in my life."

YMCAs Get People Moving

One of the most important health issues in the country today is America's epidemic of obesity and inactivity. As the nation's largest network of charitable, not-for-profit organizations focused on improving lifestyle health, YMCAs are uniquely positioned to help address this health crisis. Through the multiyear "Activate America" initiative, YMCAs are leading the way in promoting healthier living for all Americans.

A Long-Standing Commitment to Health and Wellness

For more than 150 years, YMCAs have been strengthening communities and helping people grow in spirit, mind and body. George Williams founded the YMCA in 1844 to create a positive alternative to London's unsavory diversions for young men like himself. While wholesome recreation is redefined for each generation, YMCAs have always provided a sense of belonging, people who care, a choice of activities that build skills and a place to have fun.

Today, America's 2,575 YMCAs are collectively the largest providers of community-based health and wellness programs in the country, and are accessible to all people, regardless of physical abilities or income levels.

At the Heart of Community Life

YMCAs go beyond sports and recreation when it comes to building healthy individuals and communities. They are the largest providers of private child care programs in the country, providing high-quality, affordable care to more than 500,000 children.

America's YMCAs have a deep-rooted presence in thousands of communities from coast to coast. Nineteen million members, 50,000 full- and part-time staff and almost 600,000 volunteers engage in programs and services, build community collaborations and raise money for subsidized or free memberships, ensuring that no one is turned away because of inability to pay.

Improving Health Throughout Communities

There is a movement growing at local YMCAs to engage even more people in physical activity and offer more diverse wellness programs. Some recent inspiring projects include:

- **Shared West Coast Total Health Project**
  The YMCAs of Seattle, Portland, OR, Santa Clara Valley, CA, San Francisco, and Los Angeles joined together five years ago in an effort to reach more people by promoting total health.

- **Community Health Collaboration**
  Two branches of the Suncoast YMCA in Clearwater, FL, have teamed with the local health department in an effort to improve the physical activity levels in the community and help residents adopt a more healthful lifestyle.

- **Coordinated Approach To Child Health (CATCH) and Family Cooks**
  This comprehensive youth health and fitness initiative implemented by the YMCA of Greater Rochester, NY, involves an after-school activities curriculum and a program that brings families together around healthy food and teaches cooking skills and nutrition fundamentals.

A Track Record of Pioneering Programs

Here are just a few of the "firsts" for the YMCA:

1881 Boston YMCA's Robert J. Roberts coins the term "bodybuilding."

1885 Sumner Dudley founds the nation's oldest continuously operating YMCA camp, known today as Camp Dudley. Also, the world's first indoor swimming pool is built at Brooklyn (NY) Central YMCA.

1891 James Naismith invents basketball at International YMCA Training School (Springfield, MA). Dr. Luther Gulick designs YMCA logo, an equilateral triangle to show balance of body, mind and spirit.

1895 William G. Morgan of Holyoke (MA) YMCA invents volleyball.

1906 George Corsan of Toronto, hired by Detroit YMCA, revolutionizes water safety and teaching with mass swimming lessons.

1950 First racquetball game led by its inventor, Joe Sobek, at Greenwich (CT) YMCA.

1970 Jackie Sorenson begins "dance exercise" classes at the Towson (MD) YMCA, leading to the boom in "aerobic dancing" in the U.S.

1971 "Y's Way to Physical Fitness" program establishes national fitness testing standard.

1976 YMCA launches nationwide cardiovascular health program.

1986 YMCA of the USA introduces "YMCA Fitness Leaders," a standard program for training and certifying fitness instructors.

1992 YMCAs conduct first national Healthy Kids Day to encourage healthy development of youth; it becomes an annual April event.

2004 YMCA of the USA, with the help of senators Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA), unveils YMCA "Activate America" initiative, a multiyear plan for leading community-based solutions to address the nation's declining health and rise in obesity and chronic diseases.

Jax Photography/Jacqueline Malonson

YMCA
ACTIVATING AMERICA

profile: Julie Hall

Julie Hall turned her life around, shedding 242 pounds by changing her diet and exercising at the YMCA of Greater Charlotte, NC. Hall says, "This was a successful journey through rough waters. Now my deepest desire is to reach back to help others. I want to do that through the Y, to make sure the Y is known as a place where severely overweight people will get a warm welcome and real help."

profile: John Norton

John Norton, 59, of Champaign County, IL, says, "About 20 years ago, I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia. It was suggested that the pool would be a good therapy option. I came to the YMCA and found both a warm-water swimming pool and a whirlpool tub. I used to have unbelievable pain from the fibromyalgia, and I could barely deal with it anymore. Now I am able to get things done and go about my daily activities. I owe everything to the YMCA."

profile: Elle Westercamp

Nine-year-old Elle Westercamp was diagnosed with asthma at age five. Through a scholarship, her family was able to join the YMCA of Greater Des Moines, IA. She says, "I remember running after my sister and not being able to catch my breath. That was really scary. Since I couldn't run, I started swimming. I haven't had to use an inhaler or have treatments for over two years now thanks to the YMCA, because swimming made me healthy again." Elle is now a nationally ranked swimmer.

> "Find an activity that you enjoy—running, golfing or even gardening—and do it. We need to get more people more active and start focusing on prevention instead of treatment."
>
> Tommy G. Thompson
> Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
> Activate America conference, September 2004

Just How Important Is Physical Activity?

In a word—extremely. We all know that exercise is good for us. But many people don't know that exercise is critical for sustaining good health. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, regular physical activity improves health in the following ways:

- Reduces the risk of dying prematurely from heart disease
- Reduces the risk of developing diabetes
- Reduces the risk of developing colon and breast cancer
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety
- Promotes psychological well-being

*Source: "Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

Getting Active Is Easier Said Than Done

Many people are making an effort to move toward a healthier lifestyle. Adults spend an estimated $30 billion per year on unsuccessful attempts to sustain a healthy lifestyle. Having a YMCA to support, motivate and celebrate individual efforts improves the odds of maintaining healthy habits throughout life.

YMCA Activates America

The goal of "Activate America" is to help Americans live longer, better and healthier lives by focusing on community-based solutions to combat obesity and chronic disease. This 10-year initiative launched in September 2004, when the YMCA of the USA and its partners hosted the "Activate America: Pioneering Healthier Communities" national conference. The 140 action-minded civic leaders and YMCA advocates from across the country left the conference with proven behavior-modification strategies and a shared promise and obligation to develop and implement community-based solutions to reverse the nation's physical inactivity and rise in obesity.

This Special Advertising Feature was produced by TIME Marketing in collaboration with YMCA of the USA. Creative Services Director: Liza Greene; Design: Paul McKevitt/Paul Kelly; Writer: Gloria Fallon.

Building a Healthier You

Americans want to incorporate healthier living into their lives, and the YMCA is there to help them do it. To learn more about YMCA "Activate America" and to find a local YMCA near you, please visit www.ymca.net. The site finds the Ys closest to you and provides facility descriptions, program listings and hours of operation. Take the YMCA up on its commitment to build a better you!

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