YMCA of BELARUS

Belarus

The Republic of Belarus, which gained its independence in 1991, is a small, landlocked nation amongst other former Soviet Union republics. Belarus has flat terrain with significant marshlands, the result of ancient glacial movements. The country is about the size of Kansas and the home to more than 10 million people.

The YMCA of Belarus

In a political environment in which non-profits struggle, the YMCA has proven to be a lasting and influential organization within the nation. The first local YMCAs appeared in 1994, only a few short years after the fall of the Soviet Union. The National YMCA Belarus was constituted in 2000, and since then has grown to seven associations. During this same time, many other non-profit community service organizations in Belarus have opened but then closed their doors due to tight government regulations and restrictions.

Annually, nearly 2,000 young people are served by the seven YMCAs. The national focus of the YMCA is in directing children and young adults towards healthy lifestyles and life choices, through education, recreation, and the fostering of community. For example, heath education issues such as HIV/AIDS and drug abuse are addressed through programs that incorporate sports, scouting, or drama and performance to help share important messages. Belarus YMCA is led almost entirely by young adult volunteers who are seeking ways to serve their community while developing their own leadership skills. The YMCA has provided these young community leaders with the opportunities to explore, share, and grow their personal talents in education, arts, athletics, and more. Sasha Drachuk, a key volunteer for the Belarusian YMCA movement, states that "The YMCA is an organization that cares—not just for the young people it serves, but for the whole nation." ▼

Partnerships: | YMCA of Greater Boston, Burbank Family YMCA

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