



Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs

# FALL STAFF RALLY 2025



PRESENTED BY:



# 2025 FALL STAFF RALLY



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Executive Director/CEO  
Pav YMCA

### NATASHA HOWARD

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Edwardsville YMCA

### MEGAN STRAMA

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### SAHARA ADAMS

Aquatics Director  
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### PATRICK MAINIERI

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COO, Bloomington-Normal YMCA

### PAIGE THOMPSON

Director of Youth Development  
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### ALYSSAANN ANDERSON

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Gateway Region YMCA

### RAJ WALLER

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Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois

### MISSY CONTRI

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### MIKE ORTIZ

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### EDDIE EDWARDS

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### SARAH RHODEBECK

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### ALEX GEISLER

Membership Director,  
Mt Sterling Community Center YMCA

### FRANCISCO SARAVIA

IT Director  
YMCA of Springfield

## IL STATE ALLIANCE OF YMCAS STAFF:

### GLENN HALEY

CEO

### WENDY BONILLA

Director of Alliance Services  
& Special Projects

# WELCOME TO THE FALL STAFF RALLY!



## Jamie Kucera

Executive Director/CEO,  
Pav YMCA  
Chair, 2025 Fall Rally Planning  
Committee

### Dear YMCA Leaders,

On behalf of the entire planning committee, it is my honor to welcome you to the 2025 Fall Staff Rally! I'm thrilled to join you for this exciting and inspiring event where we gather to connect, educate, and ignite the passions that drive our mission forward. This year's theme, "Game On! Connect, Educate, Inspire," captures the essence of what we do at the Y: we create spaces where people come together, learn, and grow. Just like the world of games, we unite in shared experiences that help us challenge ourselves, work as a team, and find joy in the journey. As we come together, we are not only sharpening our skills but also discovering new ways to overcome challenges, think creatively, and inspire each other to be our best selves.

The Y's mission has always been rooted in creating connections—and there's no better time than now to strengthen those bonds. Over the course of the next few days, you will have the opportunity to connect with colleagues who share your passion for the Y's work. You will dive into educational workshops, discover new tools to foster success, and be inspired to continue growing, not just as professionals but as leaders in the communities that you serve.

I want to take a moment to recognize the dedication each one of you brings to our work. You are the heart of the Y, and through your commitment, creativity, and tireless effort, we continue to create spaces where all people can thrive.

As we embrace the spirit of "Game On," let's challenge ourselves to think outside the box, to push beyond the expected, and to find innovative ways to make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Together, we are building a brighter future for our communities, one connection, one education, and one inspiration at a time.

Thank you for your commitment to the movement and for the incredible work you do every day. Let's make this Fall Staff Rally a moment to celebrate our journey and re-energize our spirit to continue to do great things across the state of Illinois!

Let the games begin!

Warm regards,  
Jamie

# SPONSORS, VENDORS & PARTNERS



Please join us in thanking our sponsors and vendors for their continued support and generosity. Be sure to stop by our vendor booths during the Rally to learn more about these fantastic companies and enter your raffle ticket for a chance to win a prize. **Vendor contact information can be found on pages 20 and 21.**

## PRESENTING SPONSORS



## ACTIVITY SPONSORS



## VENDORS



## PARTNERS



# FALL STAFF RALLY SCHEDULE



## PRE-CONFERENCE TRAINING

### Wednesday, September 24

9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Fundamentals of Fundraising

#### Location:

Bloomington-Normal Marriott  
201 Broadway,  
Normal, IL 61761  
309- 862-9000

#### Registration:

See details on next page.

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 8:30 am – 10:30 am  | Registration + Vendor Tables Open   |
| 9:30 am – 10:20 am  | Workshops Round I   |
| 10:20 am – 10:30 am | Transition Break + Vendor Time  |
| 10:30 am – 12:00 pm | Opening Session   |
|                     | Chair Welcome   |
|                     | The Power of Thinking, Feeling and Imagination – Lisa Behrends                    |
| 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm  | Lunch   |
| 1:00 pm – 1:15 pm   | Transition Break + Vendor time  |
| 1:15 pm – 2:15 pm   | Peer Community Group Time   |
| 2:15 pm – 2:30 pm   | Transition Break + Vendor time  |
| 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm   | Workshop Round II options   |
| 3:30 pm – 3:45 pm   | Transition Break + Vendor time  |
| 3:45 pm – 4:45 pm   | Workshop Round III options  |
| 4:45 pm – 6:00 pm   | Transition Break/ Vendor Reception / Dinner                                       |
| 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm   | Weathering the Storm: Lessons in Navigating Disaster for Any Y<br>– Cory Harrison |

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 7:30 am – 8:30 am  | Breakfast   |
| 7:30 am – 9:15 am  | CEO Breakfast   |
| 8:15 am – 9:15 am  | How To's  |
| 9:15 am – 9:30 am  | Break + Check Out   |
| 9:30 am – 11:30 am | Closing Session   |
|                    | Social Impact of Intergenerational Leadership – Ben Major |
| 11:30 am           | Closing, Farewell   |

# PRE-CONFERENCE TRAINING



**The Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs, in partnership with YMCA of the USA and Northern Midwest Learning Center, is pleased to offer the following pre-conference training.**

## **Fundamentals of Fundraising / Trainer**

Wednesday, September 24th, 9am-5pm

Bloomington-Normal Marriott, 201 Broadway, Normal, IL 61761

Instructor: Carrie Collins, CRFE, Senior Director, Philanthropy Engagement, YMCA of the USA

Registration Fee: \$75 (\$25 for Trainer)

Registration Link: <https://lcdc.yexchange.org/s/c41v95t>

Expand your fundraising knowledge and help your Y more fully reach its philanthropic potential. This new, day-long course is focused on why fundraising is important to both the Y and continued professional development. Participants will learn about basic, contemporary fundraising strategies and become confident in telling the Y story for the purpose of inviting philanthropic support. The training has a focus on the donor-centered cycle of fundraising and its role in a strong development program. Designed to elevate fund development knowledge, this new training opportunity will help to build a foundation for a stronger philanthropic culture. This training is geared for Y staff members looking to grow their fundraising knowledge.

Leadership Competencies Developed

- Communication & Influence
- Critical Thinking & Decision Making
- Philanthropy
- Volunteerism
- Functional Expertise

# HOTEL FLOOR PLAN



## BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL MARRIOTT HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER

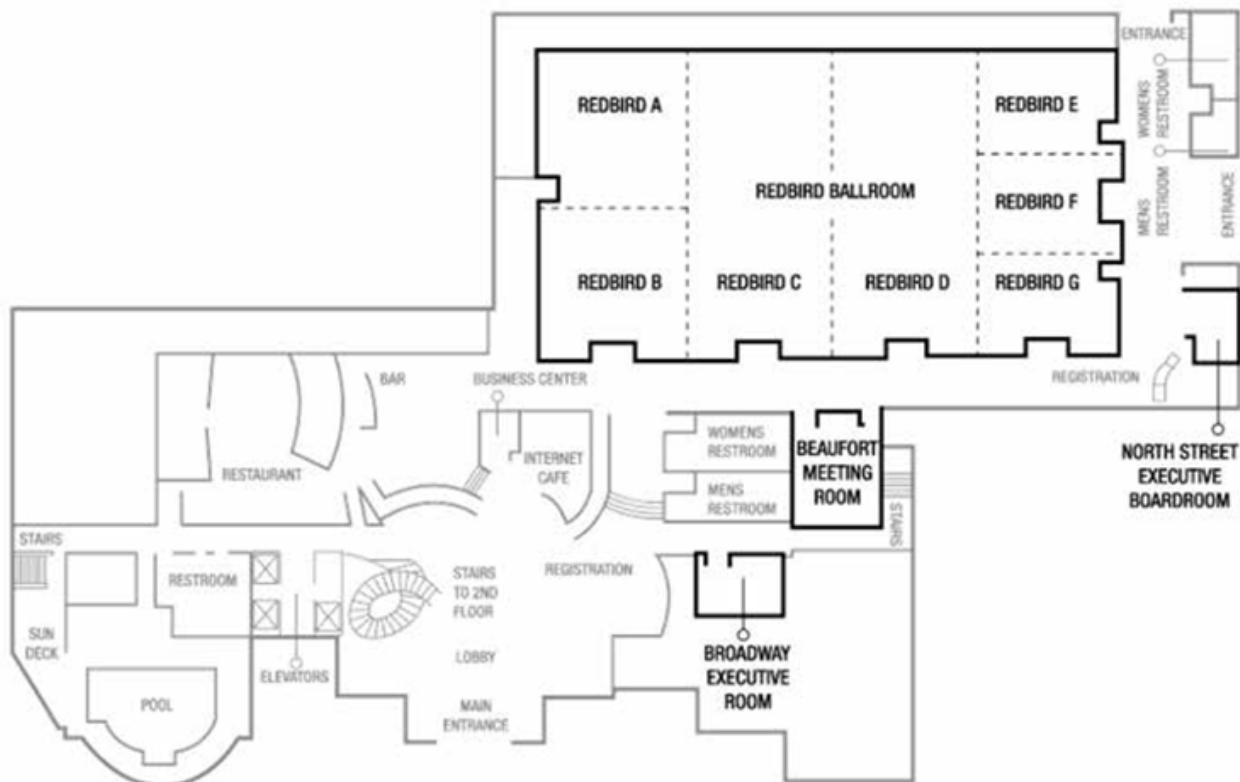
201 Broadway, Normal, IL 61761

Welcome to the newly remodeled hotel and conference center! **Check-in time is 3 p.m.** and **check-out is noon.** Guests will be permitted to check-in earlier or check-out later subject to room availability. Baggage will be stored at no charge for early arrivals and late departures.

### SECOND FLOOR



### FIRST FLOOR





# RALLY PERKS & PLUSES



## ONE-ON-ONE RETIREMENT FUND CONSULTATIONS

Are you on-track for retirement? Book a one-on-one consultation with Matt Servedio, Manager of Education & Y Relations, Y Retirement Fund:

<https://go.oncehub.com/ConsultationswithMattServedioILFR>

## VENDOR GIVEAWAYS!

Thanks to the generosity of our wonderful vendors, all Rally attendees will have the opportunity to win fantastic prizes. Rally attendees will receive 10 raffle tickets at registration, which can be deposited in the raffle bags at each vendor booth. We will be drawing the winning tickets during the Vendor Reception. Good luck!

## FALL RALLY MEALS

All meals and breaks are included in the conference fee. Those requesting special dietary requirements for meals at the time of registration will be honored. Unfortunately, we will not be able to honor last minute requests.

## FALL RALLY EVALUATION

As a conference participant, you will receive an email shortly after the conference that will direct you to an online conference survey. Thank you in advance for sharing your feedback with the planning committee.

## THURSDAY AFTERNOON PEER COMMUNITIES:

Peer Communities connect professionals from across the state with similar job functions or projects. Members of each peer community will meet to network, brainstorm, troubleshoot and share successes and challenges. Although your work may involve multiple Peer Communities, we ask that you please select ONE to participate in during the Rally.

- Aquatics
- Early Childhood
- Employee Services (HR/Payroll)
- Executive Leadership
- Finance
- Fund Development
- Health & Wellness
- Membership & Marketing
- Out of School Time/Camp/Teens
- Property Management/Facilities
- Sports



## GET SOCIAL!

Help us capture memories from this year's Rally by posting photos to Facebook, Instagram and X using these hashtags:

- #ILRally2025
- #BeCauseY  
(get us on the 'Living Our Cause' feed)
- @illinoisymcas



# GENERAL SESSION PRESENTATIONS



## THE POWER OF THINKING, FEELING AND IMAGINATION

**Lisa Behrends**

The power of thinking, feeling, and imagination shapes not only our personal lives but also our workplace experiences. The way we think influences our problem-solving and decision-making, our emotions impact teamwork and leadership, and our imagination fuels innovation and growth. You have the power to create the career and work environment you desire by shifting your mindset and aligning your emotions and actions with your goals.

After attending this session, participants should be able to:

1. Recognize the connection between mindset and workplace outcomes
2. Apply techniques that fosters growth and strengthens decision-making skills
3. Learn to manage their emotions and use them to improve teamwork, leadership, and communication

## WEATHERING THE STORM: LESSONS IN NAVIGATING DISASTER FOR ANY Y

**Cory Harrison, Vice President of Overnight Camping, YMCA of Greenville**

In this candid and engaging session, Cory Harrison, Vice President of Overnight Camping for the YMCA of Greenville, draws from Camp Greenville's experience recovering from a devastating hurricane—and broadens the lens to include all types of disasters that can impact a YMCA. Whether facing a global pandemic like COVID-19, wildfires, severe weather events, a serious staff incident that draws media attention, or even a tragic drowning, this session covers the full spectrum of crisis scenarios.

Cory will share transparent insights into immediate crisis response, managing complex insurance and government processes, and leading long-term recovery and renewal efforts. Attendees at this keynote will gain valuable strategies for crisis management, clear and honest communication with stakeholders, and building resilient organizations that can sustain their mission no matter the disruption.

Through vivid storytelling, photos, and lessons learned, Cory will highlight what worked, what didn't, and what he would do differently in hindsight. This session is essential for YMCA leaders and staff across all program areas and regions who want to strengthen their emergency preparedness, protect their communities, and navigate the unpredictable with confidence.



## SOCIAL IMPACT OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP

**Benjamin Major, Vice President, Social Impact, Florida State Alliance of YMCAs**

As we enter a future with increased generational diversity in economic and civic decision-making spaces, it is now more important than ever to understand the intergenerational system. Let's explore how each generation influences the way society navigates through a rapidly changing world.

# WORKSHOPS



## **THURSDAY MORNING WORKSHOPS:**

### **Streamline Your Group Communication**

#### **BAND, Kevin Cantillon, Partnerships & Growth Marketing**

Organize everything, notify everyone – BAND is your all-in-one app for everything: messages, calendars, files, photos, videos, and more. and communicate with everyone Experience better communication with BAND! Join this session to learn how to experience better communication with the free BAND app.

### **Shaping the YMCA of Tomorrow:**

#### **Partnerships and Trends in Facility Design**

#### **Legat Architects, Jay Johnson and Ted Haug**

Is there a new building or building remodel in your future? Join this session to learn about the latest trends and leading practices.

### **Play Like a Pro: Expanding Access to Youth Sports**

#### **RCX Sports, Jordan Woods, Growth Manager**

RCX Sports is the official youth sports partner of the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, and MLS, operating league-branded programs like NFL FLAG, Jr. NBA Leagues, MLB Jr. Play Ball, NHL STREET, and MLS GO. We work with hundreds of YMCAs and Parks & Rec departments nationwide to make youth sports more accessible, inclusive, and fun. Our mission is to elevate the recreational experience—helping every kid play like a pro. Join us to explore how we can work together to make sports more accessible and increase youth sports participation in your communities.

### **AI Assistants for Human-Focused Work:**

#### **Amplifying the Mission, Not Replacing It**

#### **Traction Rec, John Winston**

AI is showing up everywhere, we know it's no longer just a buzzword, and it's becoming part of our everyday lives! So the real question is: how do we ride this wave without losing the human touch and heart? In this interactive session, we'll explore how YMCAs are already using AI to tackle real-world challenges, make operations and program development smarter and faster, and free up time for your team.

Even more, we'll peek into the deeper possibilities of AI, where it's fully integrated into your organization and works alongside you as a true teammate. Picture it like your favourite colleague who's been with the Y from day one, knowing every member and donor, pulling reports in a few clicks, and supporting you with more time and energy to building relationships and driving mission impact. Join the conversation with your ideas, insights, and experiences, and open the door to what AI could look like in your Y.

### **The Member Experience – Understanding the Importance of Design, Facility Layout, & Aesthetics**

#### **Torque Fitness, Tom McCarthy**

Healthy Living undoubtedly drives much of the revenue Ys bring in on an annual basis. From memberships to program participation to PT and small group training, providing members and prospective members with a representative “fitness center” in today's ultra-competitive wellness industry is paramount for Ys to maintain and grow membership.

While the equipment, programs, and overall Healthy Living offerings must obviously be a focal point, understanding the importance of design, laying out the facility – both where “things” go and how they go – and the overall aesthetics of a building are of equal importance and often don't get the attention they deserve.

We look forward to a completely collaborative discussion on the importance of checking all the boxes when it comes to equipment/programming, facility design/layout, and aesthetics (flooring/turf, wall materials/colors, storage, etc.)

### **Making the Most of Y Retirement Benefits**

#### **Matt Servedio, Manager of Education and Y Relations, Y Retirement Fund**

This presentation will highlight the unique retirement benefit that your Y provides – the YCMA Retirement Fund! We will explore the differences between the Y Retirement's two Plans- the 401(a) Retirement Plan and the 403(b) Savings Plans (including the Tax-Deferred Account, Roth Account and Rollovers) – and how you as a Y employee can achieve lifetime income in retirement just by saving with the Y Retirement.

# WORKSHOPS



## THURSDAY AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

### **Adaptive/Inclusive Programming**

**Alyssa Anderson, Larkyn's Place Director and Jeff Scott, CEO, Stephens Family YMCA**

In 2012, an idea was born– to create an innovative and universally designed YMCA that was a place for the WHOLE family– specifically, for parents and families of children with disabilities. This presentation will take you through conception, design, construction thoughts, budgeting ideas, and programming design for creating a disability inclusive YMCA. Both presenters will be available to assist in problem solving strategies for YMCA's just starting their disability inclusion, to those doing disability inclusion well.

### **Building a Culture of Philanthropy**

**Carrie Collins, CRFE, Senior Director, Philanthropy Engagement, YUSA**

At every level, creating a culture of philanthropy is critical for growth of your Y and support of your programs. But culture isn't a checklist item. It has to be nurtured through every intentional interaction. Learn how developing a strong culture of philanthropy begins with you and how relationship building, education, engagement, and stewardship can easily become part of your daily work.

### **Child Protection (Praesidium) Accreditation – You can do this!**

Join a panel of representatives from Illinois YMCAs – big and small – who have achieved accreditation. Facilitated by Andy Thornton, the Alliance's Champion for Child Protection, we will discuss the steps that led to success, address challenges faced along the way, and open the floor to any questions you may have. Child Protection is a membership standard that must be achieved by 2029. Together, we can make it happen.

### **Integrating Next Gen Donors into Your Annual Giving Campaign**

**Michelle Gorham, MPH, CFRE, Senior Consultant, DBD Group**

Between the great wealth transfer and expanded platforms available for giving, new generation donors are changing the face of fundraising. While it would be easier for us to say, "Back in my day..." now is the right time to adjust our thinking and both our communication methods and content, to welcome Next Gen donors into our Ys and our annual giving plans -- paving the way to successful fundraising and fulfilled donors. Let's talk about what you can do to fill your pipeline with savvy, engaged donors who are looking for opportunities to give with purpose.

### **Intentional Professional Development for You and Your Staff**

**Laila Kim, Associate Executive Director of Member Experience, YMCA of Springfield**

This hands-on How To Session will give you the tools to become more intentional and better equipped when advocating upwards (to your supervisor and everyone above you) and laterally/downwards (to your peers and reports). You will be inspired to lead by example and you will be able to pin-point in what area you or your staff needs coaching so you can reach your goal as a team.

### **It's Time to Get a Handle on Your Time**

**Jamie Kucera, Chief Operations Officer and Raj Waller, Senior Program Director, Pav YMCA**

Jamie Kucera, Chief Operations Officer and Raj Waller, Senior Program Director, Pav YMCA

Time management is the ability to plan, prioritize, and organize tasks and responsibilities in a way that maximizes efficiency and productivity. Effective time management involves setting clear goals, breaking work into manageable steps, minimizing distractions, and making intentional decisions about how time is spent. It also includes the ability to meet deadlines, adapt to shifting priorities, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Mastering time management helps individuals and teams reduce stress, improve focus, and achieve more consistent results—both personally and professionally. This interactive workshop will offer tips and tricks to overcome the challenges that you may face with time management and offer a new perspective in tackling daily work (and home) responsibilities.

### **Mental Health Community Care**

**Elli Grapp, Regional Training Director, Northern Midwest Learning Center**

Mental health is how we think, feel, and act. We all have mental health! This session will introduce the Mental Health Community Care framework, a preventive model of care that equips and empowers all individuals with the ability to provide informal, community-based mental health support.

# WORKSHOPS



## **Real Talk: Navigating Difficult Conversations with Kids, Parents, and Staff**

**Cory Harrison, Vice President of Overnight Camping, YMCA of Greenville**

Difficult conversations are inevitable in any YMCA environment—whether it's addressing challenging behavior with a camper, managing expectations with members, or confronting performance issues with staff. This session cuts through the noise and offers straightforward, actionable strategies to approach these conversations with confidence, clarity, and respect. Walk away with practical tools and mindset shifts that will empower you to handle difficult conversations head-on—so you can lead with integrity and keep your YMCA community strong and connected.

## **SEL: Leading Thru the Lens of the Child**

**Tori Dutkiewicz, Before and After School Care Director, Greater Joliet Area YMCA**

The goal for this workshop is to teach fellow childcare staff new tools to better accommodate children in our programs with special needs/accommodations. I will provide tangible tools for the participants to take with them, we will do a whole group activity to help use the tools taught, and they will be provided with something to take with them to help keep them on track when they get back to their sites.

## **Sponsorship Playbook: Winning Strategies for Local Support**

**Logan Wilson, Sr. Director of Marketing & Communications, and Dani Freeman, Director of Community Relations & Events, Bloomington-Normal YMCA**

Discover how to rally local businesses to support your YMCA events and programs. This session will walk you through practical strategies for identifying potential sponsors, crafting compelling sponsorship packages, and building lasting community partnerships. Whether you're just getting started or looking to level up your current approach, you'll leave with actionable tools to help your team score big with local support.

## **Staying Centered When Work Life Gets Messy**

**Rhiannon Yandel, Healthy Living Director, YMCA of Rock River Valley**

At the YMCA, we wear many hats, juggling tasks and serving our community in a fast-paced environment. But in the midst of the busyness, it's easy to lose touch with our own center. This workshop is designed to help you find mindful moments that keep you grounded when work life feels chaotic. We'll explore simple, effective techniques to manage stress, stay present, and create calm in the midst of your busy day. From breathing exercises to quick grounding practices, this session will equip you with the tools you need to stay centered, focused, and ready to serve with purpose. Whether you're working with members, leading your team, or managing behind-the-scenes tasks, you'll leave with practical strategies to nurture your own well-being while staying engaged in your work.

## **The Future of Membership**

**Joe Kovalcheck, Director – Strategy & Quality Practices – Membership, YMCA of the USA**

As the YMCA approaches its 175th anniversary in America, it faces a pivotal question: What does it truly mean to be a member? This session explores how the Y can move beyond transactional models and reimagine membership as a transformational connection to purpose, community, and belonging. Through a blend of history, strategy, and innovation, we'll examine how YMCAs can redefine membership to reflect the full breadth of our mission—spiritual, mental, and physical health—and build a sustainable, welcoming model that meets the evolving needs of our communities.

## **We Can't Talk About That at Work!**

### **Building Brave Spaces for Dialogue Across Differences**

**Megan Vazquez, Senior Director, North Suburban YMCA**

Conversations about race, religion, and politics are often avoided in the workplace — and for good reason. But silence can lead to deeper divisions, unmet needs, and disengagement. Inspired by Mary-Frances Winters' book *We Can't Talk About That at Work!*, this interactive workshop explores what it takes to foster brave spaces where authentic dialogue across difference can occur — respectfully, intentionally, and productively.

Participants will learn how to:

- Differentiate between safe and brave spaces
- Apply the IDEA (Invite, Dialogue, Engage, Act) model for structured conversations
- Understand their own cultural lenses and communication styles

**continued on next page**

# WORKSHOPS



- Create workplace conditions that support belonging and mutual respect

This session is grounded in practical strategies and real-world application, tailored for those looking to build inclusive, emotionally intelligent, and justice-centered teams.

## **Welcome to the Mission:**

### **Onboard with Purpose, Keep Them with Culture**

**Debbie Gaughan, Vice President of Human Resources,  
Edwardsville YMCA**

What if onboarding wasn't just about paperwork, but about belonging? As staff retention becomes an urgent challenge across the YMCA movement, this session invites a shift in how we think about hiring, onboarding, and the role of HR. We'll explore how culture begins before day one, in job postings, interviews, and the first conversations, and how the first 30 days shape the employee experience. With a focus on trust, recognition, equity, and feedback, this workshop offers space to rethink how we welcome and keep great people in mission-driven work.

## **Yearly Event Management**

**Dani Freeman, Director of Community Relations & Events,  
Bloomington-Normal YMCA**

Learn about yearly event management and how to make the most out of your events while doing less work on the day of! We will also be discussing sponsorships & opportunities for community partnerships!

## **YMCA World Service: How to Become Globally Engaged at the Y**

**Mary Tikalsky, Director and Han Lee, Manager, World Service  
Global Relations & Community Engagement, YMCA of the USA**

Take your YMCA career to the next level as you learn what it means to become a global leader at the YMCA and an ambassador of YMCA World Service. Understand the history and depth of the YMCA's global movement throughout its 180+ year legacy, how YMCAs today are working towards Vision 2030, a common global strategy that puts young people at the center, and how you can make a difference in your communities at the Y.



# HOW-TO SESSIONS



## FRIDAY MORNING “HOW-TO” SESSIONS

### **Grant Writing: Because Bake Sales Aren't Cutting It**

**Cassie DeGuido, Senior Director of Program Development,  
Bloomington–Normal YMCA**

Tired of scrambling for funds? This session will teach you how to find and evaluate the right grants, write strong proposals that fit your programmatic needs, and keep your reporting in check once the money comes in. You'll walk away with practical tools, writing tips, and real-world resources — all way more effective (and less sticky) than another bake sale.

### **Harnessing AI & Technology to Elevate Your Role Unlock Your Potential: Enhancing Your Role with AI and Modern Technology**

**David Beasley, Executive Director of Member Experience,  
Edwardsville YMCA**

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, technology isn't just a tool — it's a powerful partner in enhancing our daily work and strategic impact. This interactive workshop, led by David Beasley, is designed for all staff members eager to explore how Artificial Intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies can revolutionize their roles at the YMCA. We'll move beyond the buzzwords and dive into practical, actionable ways to integrate AI-powered tools and modern digital practices into your workflow. Discover how to streamline administrative tasks, generate creative content, analyze data more effectively, and connect with members in innovative ways. This session will provide clear examples, hands-on demonstrations, and a collaborative environment to share ideas on how these advancements can enhance your efficiency, decision-making, and overall contribution to our mission of strengthening community. Get ready to embrace the future of work and empower yourself with the digital skills that will not only simplify your tasks but also amplify your impact!

### **How to Find your People and Connect with the Movement**

**Elli Grapp, Regional Training Director,  
Northern Midwest Learning Center**

Bring your laptop (optional) and join this session with Regional Training Director, Elli Grapp, to learn more about where and how to connect with leaders across the YMCA Movement. We will spend some time getting to know each other as well as the systems and opportunities that enable you to keep meeting and connecting beyond the IL Fall Rally.

### **Lane Lines & Launch Plans: Starting Your Y's First Swim Team**

**Joel Segovia, Regional Aquatics Director,  
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago**

This session will walk you through the essential steps to launch a successful YMCA swim team; from staffing and scheduling to building team culture and navigating meet logistics. Whether you're working with a single lane or a full pool, you'll leave with practical tools, tips and a clear path to make waves at your Y.

### **Level Up Your Designs with Canva**

**Logan Wilson, Sr. Director of Marketing & Communications,  
Bloomington–Normal YMCA**

Canva is the ideal design tool for YMCA staff who wear many hats and need to create eye-catching, on-brand content fast. Whether you're designing a flyer for swim lessons, a social media post for summer camp, or signage for your lobby, Canva makes it easy with intuitive tools, customizable templates, and game-changing features.

### **Owning Your Leadership**

**Patrick Mainieri, Chief Operating Officer,  
Bloomington–Normal YMCA**

Do you question if you are a leader? How do you view the difference between leadership and management? Where are areas of your daily life and work that you need stronger leadership? This session will be a fast and furious review of your personal leadership thoughts and how those viewpoints impact your leadership of self and others.

### **The Future of Facilities: Key Trends & Innovations**

**Basil Fitzsimons, VP Real Estate and Facilities,  
YMCA of Metro Chicago**

Predictive maintenance, net-zero buildings, optimal space utilization, modular design and mixed-use developments.



# FALL RALLY AWARDS



These awards were established to recognize outstanding performances by volunteers and staff in Illinois. Staff and volunteers who receive these awards have exemplified exceptional levels of work performance and displayed high regard and loyalty to the YMCA's mission and work in their communities. Annually, an awards committee determines the recipient in each category.

## STORMY WEBSTER AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING AQUATIC DIRECTOR

Stormy Webster began as a volunteer at the B.R. Ryall YMCA in 1952 teaching swimming and lifesaving at rented facilities as the Y did not have its own building. During her 38 years of commitment to the Y as a volunteer and staff member, Stormy was dedicated to providing training and staff development to improve the quality and safety of aquatics programming for youth in Illinois and Indiana. She was a master in working with volunteers. Under her leadership Stormy recruited more than 100 aquatic volunteers that taught more than 1,500 hours per week. Some of her accolades included Volunteer of the Year at the Ryall Y, SCUBA Commissioner for the Midwest Field and the Midwest Field Physical Director of the year in 1978. Stormy retired from the YMCA in 1990 as the Program Executive of the B.R. Ryall YMCA.

The Stormy Webster award recognizes a Y Aquatics Director who displays exceptional leadership, commitment and the attributes of being a cause driven leader in aquatics at a local, neighborhood or alliance level and is employed by a YMCA in the Illinois Alliance.

### Stormy Webster Award for Outstanding Aquatics Director Recipients:

|      |                           |      |                     |      |                       |      |                  |
|------|---------------------------|------|---------------------|------|-----------------------|------|------------------|
| 2024 | Cindy Moss                | 2011 | Julie Potocki       | 2000 | Anne-Marie Buhrmester | 1989 | Nancy Reece      |
| 2023 | Arthur Steiner            | 2010 | Elaine Buckley      | 1999 | Colleen Dempsey       | 1988 | Pam Wagner       |
| 2022 | Missy Contri              | 2009 | Valarie Cahill      | 1998 | Anita Perrotti        | 1987 | Jeanette Bylwerk |
| 2020 | Caitlin (Catie) N. Wallis | 2007 | Joy Thomen          | 1997 | Cheryl Dollinger      | 1986 | Kathi Cook       |
| 2019 | Deb Mortonson             | 2006 | Lori Siegel         | 1996 | Teresa Hill           | 1985 | Mike Boyer       |
| 2018 | Lynnae Touchette          | 2005 | Karen Scott         | 1995 | Pat Burns             | 1984 | Jeff Campbell    |
| 2017 | Jenny Rogel               | 2004 | Mary Lou Pease      | 1994 | Sandy Krol            | 1983 | Karen Bruchan    |
| 2016 | Danielle Krohn            | 2003 | Kathryn L. Borgmann | 1993 | Kristi Umsted         | 1982 | Vicky Blough     |
| 2015 | Lesley Webster            | 2002 | Chris Bertana       | 1992 | Lynn Mikovich         | 1981 | Jeff Ottaviano   |
| 2014 | Sarah Jones               | 2001 | Kathy Dueball       | 1991 | Jill Steiner          | 1980 | Mike Cook        |
| 2012 | Jen Foley                 |      |                     | 1990 | Paddy Harrington      | 1979 | Stormy Webster   |

# FALL RALLY AWARDS



## MATT OTTAVIANO OUTSTANDING PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

Matt Ottaviano served as the Executive Director of the Lawson YMCA in Chicago before becoming Vice President of Operations at the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago. During this time Matt also led many MRC services. He exemplified the characteristics of a cause driven leader. He was honest, fair, intelligent, and friendly. His philanthropic spirit and dedication to the movement allowed him to relate to major donors, staff, as well as connect to the everyday Y member.

The Matt Ottaviano award recognizes a program director who displays exceptional leadership, commitment and the attributes of being a cause driven leader in program areas such as resident camp, day camp, child care, arts and humanities, youth services, youth sports, gymnastics, and teen programming. Peer Communities: Overnight (Resident) Camp, Day Camp, Teen, Before and After School, Early Learning

### Matt Ottaviano Outstanding Program Director Award Recipients:

|      |                           |      |                       |      |                    |      |                   |
|------|---------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|--------------------|------|-------------------|
| 2024 | Alex Totura – Program     | 2016 | Derek Schlager        | 2005 | Sue DeTaeye        | 1994 | Scott Clark       |
|      | Paige Thompson-Childcare  | 2015 | Lisa Parfitt          | 2004 | Mary Pedersen      | 1993 | Erika Barton-Wood |
|      |                           | 2014 | Allison Greenman      | 2003 | G. Dianne Williams | 1992 | Judy Bucci        |
| 2023 | Megan Edwards-Program     | 2013 | Sarita Smith          | 2002 | Rona Roffey        | 1992 | Kim Stout         |
|      | Guylene Strange-Childcare | 2012 | Cory Harrison         | 2001 | Jann Martin        | 1991 | Terry Feldt       |
|      |                           | 2011 | Melissa Ryan          | 2000 | Maureen McCarthy   | 1990 | D'Ann Lagerblade  |
| 2022 | Rona Rafferty             | 2010 | Katrina Luetkebuenger | 1999 | Kimberly George    | 1989 | Judy Ellertson    |
| 2019 | Rob Busby                 | 2009 | Susan Chansey         | 1998 | Kathy Holland      | 1988 | David Lee         |
| 2018 | Julie Kapsch              | 2007 | Amy Johnson           | 1997 | Claudia Lesser     | 1987 | Jill Kawulok      |
| 2017 | Lisa McCully              | 2007 | Shannon Payton        | 1996 | Scott Peterson     | 1986 | Nancy Battersby   |
|      |                           | 2006 | Debbie Bruce          | 1995 | Jacki Steffen      | 1985 | Shirley Spears    |

## JOSEPH ROKNICH AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING FITNESS-WELLNESS DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

Joseph Roknich was Executive Director at the Irving Park YMCA before becoming the Vice President of Operations for YMCA of Chicago and MRC Director. The Joseph Roknich award recognizes a Y staff person who displays exceptional leadership, commitment and the attributes of being a cause driven leader in the area of health, fitness/wellness. Peer Communities: Health and Wellness

### Joseph Roknich Award for Outstanding Fitness/Wellness Director Recipients:

|      |                     |      |                   |      |                  |      |                   |
|------|---------------------|------|-------------------|------|------------------|------|-------------------|
| 2024 | Eddie Edwards       | 2000 | Don Quinlan       | 1982 | Doug Kohl        | 1963 | Bruce Bromley     |
| 2023 | Jennifer Buckwalter | 1999 | Kim Webb          | 1981 | Wray Howard      | 1962 | J. Larry Meyer    |
| 2022 | Emily Hayden        | 1998 | Kimberly Stewart  | 1980 | Jean Thigpen     | 1961 | G. Mike Chianakas |
| 2020 | Kristen Derengowski | 1997 | Tim McCoy         | 1979 | Rich Escutia     | 1960 | Gordon Peterson   |
| 2019 | Breanne Anderson    | 1996 | Peg Paligraf      | 1978 | Stormy Webster   | 1959 | Art Holland       |
| 2018 | Angela Foulke       | 1995 | Monica Kaminski   | 1977 | Art Michaely     | 1958 | Earl Wilson       |
| 2017 | Ian Stewart         | 1994 | Tony White        | 1976 | Marlow B. Garvin | 1957 | Merton Kennedy    |
| 2014 | Chelsey Bowermaster | 1993 | Diana Last        | 1975 | Joni Coe         | 1956 | Joe Roknich       |
| 2012 | Kim Jass Ramirez    | 1992 | Vicki Lettow      | 1974 | Dave Diehr       | 1955 | Jerry Martins     |
| 2010 | Amy Kanzler         | 1991 | Gretchen Kelly    | 1973 | Cliff Lothery    | 1954 | Bill Bartley      |
| 2009 | Gretchen Isaac      | 1990 | Robin Cagle       | 1972 | Nicki Doehler    |      |                   |
| 2007 | Scott Earl          | 1989 | Liz Heller        | 1970 | Yvonne Rish      |      |                   |
| 2006 | Sue Munz            | 1988 | Doug Thornton     | 1969 | Bob Day          |      |                   |
| 2005 | Cheryl Green        | 1987 | Linda Dean        | 1968 | Bob Turner       |      |                   |
| 2004 | Eddie Papis         | 1986 | Jim Rowland       | 1967 | Jerry Woolley    |      |                   |
| 2003 | Pam Gall            | 1985 | Mike Parks        | 1966 | Helen Coryell    |      |                   |
| 2002 | Connie Laidlaw      | 1984 | Dottie Bonnenfant | 1965 | Walt Brantley    |      |                   |
| 2001 | Sandi Philippin     | 1983 | Frank Klipsch     | 1964 | Chuck Donecko    |      |                   |

# FALL RALLY AWARDS



## OUTSTANDING MEMBERSHIP-MARKETING DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

The Outstanding Membership/Marketing Director Award recognizes the Membership or Marketing Director who is committed to the member experience, displays leadership, creativity and exceptional customer service. Peer Communities: Membership, Marketing

### Outstanding Membership/Marketing Director Award Recipients:

|      |                 |      |                  |      |                  |      |                  |
|------|-----------------|------|------------------|------|------------------|------|------------------|
| 2024 | Ben Engle       | 2018 | Abby Helm        | 2013 | Alicia Whitworth | 2007 | Wendy Bonilla    |
| 2023 | Alex Geisler    | 2017 | Ashlee Heady     | 2012 | Keri Olson       | 2006 | Elizabeth Davin  |
| 2022 | Lexie Zebe      | 2016 | Michelle Polivka | 2011 | Beth Reusch      | 2005 | Marcia Green     |
| 2020 | Heather Dunker  | 2015 | Margaret Willet  | 2010 | Jean Flider      | 2004 | Michele Chandler |
| 2019 | Hannah Robinson | 2014 | Margie Hennig    | 2009 | Teresa Hoshauer  | 2003 | Jan M. Jann      |

## OUTSTANDING FACILITIES, BUILDING, AND/OR PROPERTIES DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

The Outstanding Facilities Director of the Year Award recognizes a full-time Facility Director in the Y movement for outstanding efforts in managing and maintaining a YMCA facility or facilities. Peer Communities: Property Management

### Outstanding Facilities, Building and/or Properties Director of the Year Award Recipients:

|      |               |      |                |      |                 |
|------|---------------|------|----------------|------|-----------------|
| 2024 | John Shea     | 2017 | Tom Verheyen   | 2013 | Don Stolz       |
| 2022 | Manar Nuaimi  | 2016 | Jeremy Nelson  | 2012 | Dave Wassenhove |
| 2019 | Jim Trainor   | 2015 | Greg Smith     | 2011 | Walter Myers    |
| 2018 | Joe Newingham | 2014 | Gary Weirather | 2010 | Ralph Alvarez   |

## OUTSTANDING SUPPORT SERVICES OR ADMIN OF THE YEAR

The Outstanding Admin Award recognizes an administrative or support staff in the YMCA movement who provides exemplary service to his/her YMCA operation or department and is dedicated team member that has demonstrated the core values of the YMCA movement. Peer Communities: Finance, Employee Services

### Outstanding Support Services or Admin of the Year Award Recipients:

|      |                  |      |                   |      |               |      |              |
|------|------------------|------|-------------------|------|---------------|------|--------------|
| 2024 | Kayla Carter     | 2020 | Leslee Schueneman | 2017 | Tom DuBois    | 2012 | Julie Easton |
| 2023 | Argelia Gonzalez | 2019 | Nicole Propst     | 2015 | Nancy Witt    | 2011 | Sue Jackson  |
| 2022 | Ellen Corbin     | 2018 | Jane Bowers       | 2014 | Charlie Irick | 2010 | Amy Robbins  |

## TOM STOLL AWARD

Tom Stoll, who passed away May 1, 2003, spent nearly 40 years in a love affair with the Y. Beginning in 1953 as a part-time volunteer at Oak Park Y Camp Douglas, Tom touched the lives of staff, volunteers, and members with the Oak Park, Aurora, Streator, and Naperville Ys. Tom was well known and respected for both the volunteer and staff leadership that he attracted and nurtured in the movement. As CEO of both the Streator and Naperville Ys, he built boards that were able to take good Ys and make them great. Tom recognized the importance of developing staff outside of his Y through active participation in both APD – now YPN – and as an instructor at Waubensee Valley Community College and George Williams College.

In recognition of Tom Stoll's Y legacy, the Tom Stoll Award has been established as an annual recognition presented to a Y professional on the ascending edge of service and who has developed outstanding executive or operational leadership and loyalty. Peer Communities: Operations, Executive Leadership

### Tom Stoll Award Recipients:

|      |                  |      |                |
|------|------------------|------|----------------|
| 2024 | Kristen Lay      | 2018 | Kathy Fielding |
| 2022 | Allison Greenman |      |                |

# FALL RALLY AWARDS



## DIG AWARD

The DIG Award recognizes a leader in the movement whose efforts focus on outreach to diverse and under-served communities and driving program innovation so that everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from, has an opportunity to reach their full potential. This leader is intentional on integrating inclusion strategies across the diversity wheel. Peer Communities: Diversity, Inclusion, & Global Initiatives

### DIG Award Recipients:

|      |             |      |                   |      |                      |
|------|-------------|------|-------------------|------|----------------------|
| 2020 | Daisy Moran | 2019 | Lynsey Wehrenberg | 2018 | Agneis Koenitz-Hudac |
|------|-------------|------|-------------------|------|----------------------|

## LEADERSHIP LEGACY AWARD

The Leadership Legacy Award recognizes a current Chief Executive Officer that provides extraordinary leadership to a corporate YMCA in Illinois by exemplifying the YMCA's values and mission. This award recognizes cause-driven leaders in their association, community, and the Y movement and among his or her peers across the State.

### Leadership Legacy Award Recipients:

|      |                                  |      |                  |      |                 |      |               |
|------|----------------------------------|------|------------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|
| 2024 | Chris Weittenhiller              | 2017 | B.J. Wilken      | 2011 | John Lee Usmial | 1999 | Martha Rolf   |
| 2023 | Angie Sowle                      | 2016 | Sam Brooks       | 2010 | Don Darnell     | 1998 | Don Heller    |
| 2020 | Mike Wennekamp                   | 2015 | Mark Spiegelhoff | 2006 | Judy Ellertson  | 1997 | Larry Elliott |
| 2019 | Gary Bublitz &<br>Howard Schultz | 2014 | Dan Chonowski    | 2004 | Jon Robinson    | 1996 | Dan Osterman  |
| 2018 | Deborah Allen                    | 2013 | Andy Thornton    | 2002 | Dennis Mohrman  |      |               |
|      |                                  | 2012 | Rob Wilkinson    | 2000 | Wray Howard     |      |               |

## ALLIANCE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Alliance Rookie Award recognizes a "rookie" (6-24 months of employment) in the YMCA movement for outstanding on the job achievements and for demonstrating the ability to operate and manage successful programs, membership management or fundraising efforts in the YMCA through exceptional leadership.

### Alliance Rookie of the Year Award Recipients:

|      |                   |      |                  |      |                |      |                   |
|------|-------------------|------|------------------|------|----------------|------|-------------------|
| 2024 | Zebulan Zillion   | 2015 | Clayton Lott     |      |                |      |                   |
| 2023 | Lou Bart          | 2014 | Melissa Bryant   | 2009 | Susan Krause   | 2003 | JoAnn Webster     |
| 2022 | Keesiya Robertson | 2013 | Lesley Feyerherm | 2009 | Brad Cripe     | 2002 | Melanie Brown     |
| 2020 | Rachel Latham     | 2012 | Cody Duffie      | 2007 | Kristi Brewer  | 2001 | B.J. Wilken       |
| 2019 | Sarah Tunall      | 2011 | Lance Moring     | 2006 | Joel Sieplinga | 2000 | Jan Schacht       |
| 2018 | Sarah Weyer       | 2011 | Johana Voss      | 2005 | Joe Rodts      | 1999 | Lori Oaks         |
| 2017 | Lynn Eck          | 2010 | Cari Christoff   | 2005 | Jamie Eager    | 1998 | Sarah McFarlane   |
| 2016 | Samuel Phillips   | 2010 | David Zielinski  | 2004 | Susie Engle    | 1997 | Christopher Seals |

# FALL RALLY AWARDS



## ALLIANCE COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD (STAFF AND/OR VOLUNTEER) OF THE YEAR

The Community Impact Award recognizes staff or volunteers who have made extraordinary contributions to the Y in their community and/or through the State Alliance. At the heart of every YMCA there are select staff and volunteers who give incredible amounts of time and energy to advance the Y's cause.

### Alliance Community Impact Award Staff and/or Volunteer Recipients:

|      |                |      |                    |      |                  |      |                 |
|------|----------------|------|--------------------|------|------------------|------|-----------------|
| 2024 | Carmen Ruh     | 2007 | Benno Friedrich    | 1995 | Karma Niemeyer   | 1983 | Evelyn Schum    |
| 2023 | Kelsey Barnick | 2006 | Pete Franciskovich | 1994 | The McCartys     | 1982 | Art Swanson     |
| 2022 | Dori Fugate    | 2005 | Alice Doyle        | 1993 | Gary King        | 1981 | Carol Argires   |
| 2020 | Eric Hanson    | 2004 | Mark Woods         | 1992 | Russell Hartigan | 1980 | Rich Mueller    |
| 2019 | Mike Broski    | 2003 | Ray Kimbell        | 1991 | Lee Anderson     | 1979 | Ed Warren       |
| 2018 | Gary Evans     | 2002 | Dick Larson        | 1990 | Jack Greenberg   | 1978 | Kent Arney      |
| 2016 | Cheryl Settle  | 2001 | John Asan          | 1989 | Bill Brock       | 1977 | Ernie McKinnon  |
| 2015 | Bill Gavin     | 2000 | Allan Adducci      | 1988 | David Hajek      | 1976 | Jean P. Kaine   |
| 2012 | Tim Johnson    | 1999 | George Kolovos     | 1987 | Lew Maulter      | 1975 | Charles Matheny |
| 2011 | Rick Penn      | 1998 | Mary Winters       | 1986 | Robert Talitsch  | 1974 | Helen Johnson   |
| 2010 | Angie Scraedle | 1997 | Marge Kielgznski   | 1985 | Ray Newman       | 1973 | Elmer Geissler  |
| 2009 | Rita Trent     | 1996 | Roy Olson          | 1984 | Max Zollner      |      |                 |

## PROGRAM EXCELLENCE AWARD

The Program Excellence Award celebrates Y programs that are innovative and making a difference in communities across the state of Illinois.

### Program Excellence Award Recipients:

#### 2024

Memory Keeper's Chorus - Decatur Family YMCA  
Emerging Leaders - YMCA of Rock River Valley

#### 2023

Cafe Voca - North Suburban YMCA  
Y on the Fly - Stephens Family YMCA  
Y Winners - Two Rivers YMCA

#### 2022

Illinois YMCA Youth and Government  
Saturday Strikers - YMCA of Springfield  
JOYNT Program - YMCA of the Rock River Valley

#### 2019

Nourish - Two Rivers YMCA  
The Matthew Project - YMCA of Springfield  
2 Seconds 2 Long - North Suburban YMCA

#### 2018

Camp Power - Kishwaukee Family YMCA  
Special Olympics Swim Team - North Suburban YMCA  
Go Blue - Water Safety - C.W. Avery YMCA  
Kids Marathon - Sage YMCA

# FALL RALLY AWARDS



## ALLIANCE IMPACT PARTNER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This NEW award recognizes a community or statewide partner who has supported your YMCA or Alliance over the past year by engaging as a meaningful partner in a program, an initiative or advocacy.

### Alliance Partner Award Recipients:

2024 Illinois Bone & Joint Institute

2022 Plainfield School District, C.W. Avery Family YMCA

2023 Kiwanis Club of Joliet

## YPN PEER COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

The YPN Peer Community Leadership Award recognizes an active prime Chapter 45 YPN member that has displayed outstanding achievements leading their peer community by taking a proactive approach in bringing people together from across the state to share best practices in their area of focus.

### YPN Peer Community Leadership Award Recipients:

2019 Kaia Dutler

2018 Jill Steiner

## YPN LEADER OF THE YEAR (FORMERLY AYP OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP AWARD)

The AYP Outstanding Leadership Award recognizes an active Prime Chapter 45 YPN member for effective leadership. The outstanding leader is a champion of the YPN mission and focused on professional development, leadership development, networking, and innovation.

### YPN Leader of the Year / AYP Outstanding Leadership Award Recipients:

2020 Lisa Behounek

2017 Carolyn Hamilton

2014 Katrina Luetkebuenger

2019 Jill Doerner

2016 Kaleena Escallier

2013 R.J. Bartels

2018 Darin Williams

2015 Cory Harrison

## YPN Emerging Leader of the Year Award

2016 Brooke Hall

2014 Marian Slahor

2015 Debbie Madeley



# VENDOR CONTACTS



## American City Bureau

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John Biggins  
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## BAND

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## Direct Fitness Solutions

Commercial Fitness Equipment & Flooring  
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## Efficient Air Systems

Pool and Natatorium Dehumidification  
Systems  
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## GRO

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## Legat Architects

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## Matrix

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## NinjaZone

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## NuStep

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## Precor

Commercial Fitness Equipment  
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## RCX Sports

Youth Sports Programming  
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## SPEAR Corporation

Aquatic Design, Construction, Parts  
& Service  
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## Thor Performance Products

Indoor Athletic Flooring  
Cat Chalpin  
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## Torque Fitness

Functional & Strength Equipment  
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## Traction Rec

Software/CRM Technology  
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## West Bend Mutual Insurance Company

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## YShop.biz/Sports Awards

YMCA Branded Promotional Products,  
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## OUR PARTNERS

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### Y Retirement Fund

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# ILLINOIS STATE ALLIANCE OF YMCAS



The Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs offers unique opportunities and benefits to Illinois YMCAs. Get involved today and experience the benefits of Alliance membership:

- Scholarship fund for Y professionals
- Advocacy on critical public policy issues affecting Ys
- Training opportunities through Alliance events, online and in person
- Peer groups for sharing knowledge, resources, best practices
- Joint negotiations and group purchasing, which results in better prices for all Ys
- Opportunity to access statewide grant funding
- Statewide initiatives

## 2026 RALLY PLANS

Next year, the YMCA celebrates 175 years in the U.S.! YMCA of the USA is hosting General Assembly in mid-September – just a few days before our usual Fall Staff Rally dates. Because of this, the 2026 Rally will be a one-day, program-focused event with pre-conference training opportunities. If you are interested in helping to plan this unique event, please contact Wendy Bonilla, [wendy.bonilla@illinoisymcas.org](mailto:wendy.bonilla@illinoisymcas.org).



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