



# TRANSFORMING LIVES

2023, ISSUE 1

## LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters,

What do the following have in common? The Eiffel Tower. The Lincoln Memorial. The Statue of Liberty. The Somerset County Courthouse.

None have a history as long as Greater Somerset County YMCA!

This year, 2023, marks Greater Somerset County YMCA's 150th anniversary. Since 1873, Greater Somerset County YMCA has been transforming lives and strengthening community. But, we haven't done it alone. We owe our robust history to you, our donors past and present, who invest in the Y's mission and sustainability. Not only do you champion the Y, you champion community.

I hope that this issue of Transforming Lives will bring to life a few of the many ways in which your generosity and spirit of volunteerism help to advance the Y's mission, specifically through our Annual Campaign, volunteer opportunities, and community benefit programs. The collective capacity for compassion among donors and volunteers inspires the work we do at the Y to deepen community impact.

We hope you will join us at our anniversary celebrations – save the dates are on the last page of the newsletter.

On behalf of everyone who benefits from your generosity, thank you for giving your best to the Y and our communities.

Gratefully,

*David M. Carcieri*

David M. Carcieri  
President/CEO



Pictured are guests enjoying GSCYMCA's 2023 Annual Campaign Celebration and Volunteer Spirit Awards.

## COMMUNITY STRONG Annual Campaign Update

You champion community!

Through your support of Greater Somerset County YMCA, you lift up neighbors – those in the community who struggle financially, physically, and emotionally – and ensure that they have access to services that improve their quality of life. The impact of your generosity is significant. You help:

- Local families who cannot afford child care or summer camp
- Seniors who seek connections with their peers and community
- Adults who struggle with managing chronic disease
- Families who face food insecurity
- Teens who need academic guidance and mentoring
- Children with special needs who need enriching programs to build self-assurance
- Neighbors of all ages who need the life-saving skill of swimming
- And, so much more!

Last year, Greater Somerset County YMCA provided **over \$1.7 million** in direct financial assistance to local individuals and families, as well as in support of mission-based programs that address urgent and emerging needs. One hundred percent of the funds raised in our Annual Campaign goes directly to the community.

Thanks to your generosity, we have raised **\$1,408,131** toward our overall Annual Campaign goal of \$1,550,000. With your belief in the Y's mission as our inspiration, we will continue our efforts to meet and exceed our campaign goal to ensure access for all.

If you would like to become more involved in our fundraising efforts, please contact Sylvia Velez at [svelez@gscymca.org](mailto:svelez@gscymca.org). Thank you for your continued support that strengthens community and the Y's sustainability for generations to come.

# SELFLESS SPIRIT

## 2023 Volunteer Spirit Awards

To celebrate **National Volunteer Month** in April, we proudly presented 13 Volunteer Spirit Awards to individuals and partners who volunteer their time and talent for the benefit of others. The awards recognize volunteers for their commitment, service, and leadership toward helping Greater Somerset County YMCA to fulfill its mission of strengthening community.

Volunteerism is deeply rooted in the 150-year history of the Y, and volunteers remain as important to our organization today as they were in the beginning. We are truly inspired by the meaningful contributions of all our volunteers. From helping with food distribution, to supporting individuals with special needs, to projects that inspire equity and inclusivity, our volunteers help neighbors to thrive and they are shining examples of social responsibility.

We are so thankful for all of our donors and volunteers who share a passion for transforming lives and propelling our community forward by investing in our kids, our health, and our neighbors.

Congratulations to the 2023 Volunteer Spirit Award recipients!



**YOUTH**  
**Shivang Giri**  
Teen Advocate  
Hillsborough YMCA



**YOUTH**  
**Daniela Vargas**  
Food Security  
Plainfield YMCA



**ADULT**  
**Paula Giuffre**  
Togetherhood Committee  
Bridgewater YMCA & Somerville YMCA



**FAMILY**  
**Manny & Nicky Vidal**  
Branch Board, Financial Assistance  
Committee & Video Production  
Bridgewater YMCA & Somerville YMCA



**ACTIVE OLDER ADULT**  
**Ross Wishnick**  
Food Security  
Princeton YMCA



**GROUP**  
**Courtney Scherer, Gail  
Jorgensen, Megan Pryll,  
& Ghazala Abbas**  
Gymnastics Parent Committee  
Bridgewater YMCA & Somerville YMCA



**COMMUNITY PARTNER**  
**Siobhan Spano**  
Hillsborough Township  
Health Department  
Hillsborough YMCA



**LEADERSHIP**  
**Lisa Wax**  
Branch Board, Togetherhood  
Committee & Memory Cafe  
Somerset Hills YMCA



**LIVING OUR CAUSE**  
**Bart Talloen**  
Philanthropy  
Princeton YMCA



**RAY OF LIGHT**  
**Margo Langer**  
Branch Board & Philanthropy  
Somerset Hills YMCA



**BOARD LEADERSHIP**  
**Alexandra Rebay**  
Board of Directors, Past Chair  
Greater Somerset County YMCA



**PHILANTHROPY**  
**Ana Duarte-McCarthy**  
Board of Directors, Philanthropy & DEI  
Greater Somerset County YMCA



**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT**  
**Jim Gibson**  
Board of Directors,  
Property Development & Philanthropy  
Greater Somerset County YMCA





## LIFE SAVER

### Safety Around Water

Because 71% of the earth's surface is water and 100% of children are curious, we believe every child should know how to swim. With that in mind, we integrated Safety Around Water lessons into Franklin Township YMCA's After School Care Program. The goal of the six-week program is to teach the children to be safe in and around water. Once weekly, the children are bussed to Hillsborough YMCA and taught critical skills, such as how to ask permission to enter water; how to exit a pool; how to put their faces in the water; and, how to float. Through the course of the academic year, **more than 300** children have participated in the Safety Around Water. With limited options to learn to swim in Franklin Township, we believe this vital program will save lives and make the community safer.

We are so grateful for the support of donors, like you, who make programs like this possible. You make a transformative difference.



## DANCE AROUND

### Saturdays in Motion Dance Party

On Saturday, May 6, Somerset Hills YMCA's Saturdays in Motion (SIM) volunteer-led program held its **first-ever dance party** for the closing session of the season. Saturdays in Motion is the longest running, nonpublic recreational program for children with autism and special needs in the country, and it has been running consecutively for 31 years at no cost to participants.

The concept for the SIM Dance was to provide an inclusive, fun experience for children and teens with special needs. For many individuals with special needs, a typical dance may not seem welcoming. But one thing is for sure... there was a lot of dancing and fun with no judgement at the SIM Dance.

The Dance Committee was comprised of devoted teen and adult volunteers. Their planning efforts shined through all of the event elements including the magical Disney theme, tattoos, balloons, a buffet of homemade goodies, music, dancing and, most importantly, the smiles on the faces of the participants and volunteers.

Your support of the Y makes important programs like this, and many others, possible – thank you!



## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

### ACE Program

For students in Princeton YMCA's ACE (Accept. Compete. Excel.) Program, celebrating academic success is especially rewarding. The ACE Program reduces chronic absenteeism in Princeton Public Schools and builds connections and supports for students in grades 6 to 12 who are most at risk of falling behind. The program focuses on increasing students' attendance, improving academic performance, and encouraging social-emotional learning to inspire a brighter future and positive trajectory in life. On May 24, the ACE Program participants, and their families, gathered at a dinner hosted by Princeton YMCA to celebrate the students' collective academic achievements. In total 43 students participate in ACE with an equal amount of volunteer mentors; **100% of participating seniors** graduate high school.

It is thanks to our donors and funders that the Y is able to offer programs like this that inspire our teens to reach their full potential.



## FIRST WORDS

### Wendy's Story

In October, Wendy's dad came to Hillsborough YMCA looking for support for his daughter. He was concerned because, at the age of two, she was not speaking yet. Our Y staff talked with him about our Early Education Program and helped him to complete a financial assistance application. In our Early Education program, we made it possible for Wendy to have **therapy twice weekly**, which saved time and allowed her parents to keep working. Wendy's speech began to improve in a few short months with the support of Y staff and the therapist. Wendy's father also sees the improvements and continually shares his gratitude with our staff for all that they are doing for his daughter. Wendy is doing so well with her speech and continually shows progress. On behalf of Wendy and her family, thank you for supporting the Y's financial assistance program.



## FASHION FORWARD

### Donated Prom Wear

Going to a high school prom is expensive... the tickets, flowers, dresses, suits, shoes, transportation... you name it. For some students, the expense can be the deciding factor to attend or not. To alleviate the financial burden and allow students to experience the joy of the prom, GSCYMCA asked members to consider donating gently worn prom wear to share with students through Plainfield YMCA. The response was amazing! We received **hundreds of dresses, suits, shoes, jewelry, ties, and other accessories**. We collaborated with Plainfield High School to offer a "shopping" event where students could select prom wear at no cost.

We are so grateful for the generosity of our GSCYMCA members who donated all the items, as well as for a volunteer who provided alterations. It brought great joy to the students, who looked and felt their best on prom night!



## NOURISHING NEIGHBORS

### Food Distribution

Many families in our service area continue to struggle with food insecurity; and, the struggle only intensifies during school vacations when children do not have access to free/reduced cost lunches. Understanding the issue, Somerville YMCA pulled together a team to help area families. The Food Bank Network of Somerset County, Y members, and community members donated over **650 pounds of food**. Together, Somerville YMCA Branch Board members, volunteers, and staff sorted the groceries and packed **110 bags**, which were distributed to local families the week before spring break. Through this initiative, children continue to be nourished so they can learn to the best of their ability.

We are so grateful for our donors and volunteers for their valuable contributions that help us to strengthen families.



## SUMMER CAMP

### Ready. Set. Summer!

Get ready for a summer of adventure, discovery, friendships and memories.  
[gscymca.com/camp](https://gscymca.com/camp)

You are invited... come visit camp and see, firsthand, the impact of your generosity! To schedule a visit, please contact Sylvia Velez at [svelez@gscymca.org](mailto:svelez@gscymca.org).

**SUNDAY  
JULY 9**

**GSCYMCA DAY AT THE BALLPARK**  
1:00PM • TD Bank Ballpark  
Somerset Patriots Marvel Super Hero Day  
Help us celebrate GSCYMCA's 150th Anniversary  
[Buy tickets today!](#)

**FRIDAY  
NOV. 3**

**SAVE THE DATE  
GSCYMCA 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION GALA**  
6:00PM • The Marigold in Somerset  
Learn more [here](#).



## GREATER SOMERSET COUNTY YMCA

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[gscymca.org](https://gscymca.org)

Greater Somerset County YMCA is a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose and each other. The Y empowers everyone – no matter who they are or where they're from – by ensuring access to resources, relationships and opportunities for all to learn, grow and thrive. For information about Greater Somerset County YMCA and financial assistance, visit us at [www.gscymca.org](https://www.gscymca.org).