

# Community Impacts

Fall 2010

A publication to update YMCA donors and friends about the philanthropic progress of the Association.



## Prying open the shell

### Strong Kids Campaign Spotlight: John Martin

There was a time when John Martin wasn't sure if he'd ever be a strong kid. He was quiet, shy and afraid to talk to people. But he was also creative, energetic and had a great way with children. He just didn't know it yet.

When John was 16, he was faced with the question of where to log in his required 40 hours of volunteer time for his high school diploma. His brother suggested the YMCA and the rest is history. Before long, John was a participant in the YMCA Leader Corps Program. Designed for youth ages 11-24, the Leader Corps Program combines leadership training and community work to help build confidence.

For years, John was known as "Hot Dog John" because he oversaw the fundraising barbeque cart outside the Ron Edwards YMCA. "I rode my bike to No Frills every Saturday for wieners and buns," he says smiling. Ultimately, his leadership behind the grill led to even greater opportunities that he couldn't have imagined when he was the shy teenager 4 years earlier. Ten years after he first set foot in the door at the YMCA, John is now an advisor to the Leader Corps Program and a much-loved children's programming instructor at the YMCA.

Reflecting on his experience and the importance of the Strong Kids Campaign, John says "The Y made me who I am. I stayed because I saw personal growth. It was the tool that helped pry open my shell. Slowly but surely, I realized I was holding my head up, looking people in the eye and expressing my ideas."

When asked why he thinks the Leader Corps Program is valuable, he doesn't need much time to muster an answer...

"Once kids have the confidence of older people and their peers, the sky's the limit."



*Children playfully climb on their instructor, John Martin at the Ron Edwards YMCA.*



## Message from the President & CEO



Dear Friend,

Five years ago, our strategic plan made a commitment of serving more people in the communities we serve. Five years later, I'm pleased to report that we have achieved success. In 2005, the YMCA served 88,500 individuals. Today, the YMCA is serving 192,000 individuals, remarkably more than doubling our service to communities.

The continued growth and expansion of YMCA facilities has enabled more and more people to benefit from its many programs and services. The Les Chater YMCA opened in March 2009 and has proven to be an enormous success with over 8000 members and over 1100 visitors per day. We anticipate similar, if not greater success with the current expansion in Brantford—an ambitious project with partners including Laurier Brantford, Mohawk College, Nipissing University and the Six Nations community.

All this talk of organizational growth means nothing if we can't share the impact that the YMCA has had on the people who benefit from its programs and services. Take for example, our cover story about John Martin, a young man whose life could have taken a very different turn had he not decided to do his requisite 40 high school volunteer hours at the Ron Edwards YMCA.

It's thanks to your generous gift that stories like John's are a reality at all of our YMCAs. For some, the YMCA represents a safe haven or an escape from isolation. For others, it's a springboard or a new beginning. But for most, it's a place to find strength, both inner and outer.

And at the end of the day, this creates a stronger community for all of us.

Regards,

Jim Commerford  
President & CEO

## Why We're Here

**Doug Philip helped his son and granddaughter. And himself.**

*The YMCA is many different things to many different people. Here we spotlight the everyday impact the YMCA has on members, regardless of their age, race, gender or financial status.*

63 year-old Doug Philip had never been a member of the YMCA. Then his daughter-in-law passed away from breast cancer and it all changed. Doug and his wife were quick to help their son in any way they could. They quickly realized one of the simplest things they could do was to provide care for their 3 year-old granddaughter, Ivy when their son could not. This meant taking Ivy to the Explorers program and swimming lessons a couple of times a week at the YMCA. Three years later, Doug continues this routine with the now 6 year-old Ivy. And Doug too is going to the YMCA for his own benefit 5 days a week. According to Doug, "The YMCA helped a 63 yr old man keep a preschool girl entertained for the last 3 years, while also managing to have fun with her."

## Like father, like son

### How one man hoped his son would like camp as much as he did

It's always nice to hear a YMCA story that spans generations. In 1983, Sean Clark (a self-professed "Ykid") began what would be a long-term relationship with YMCA Wanakita. His father Joe started the tradition in 1958 when he attended the camp for one summer. Despite Joe's short tenure as a camper, it was his fond memories of the place that made him register Sean in 1983. In 1990, Sean became a counselor for 4 summers in a row and it just so happened to coincide with his participation in the YMCA Leader Corps program. Eventually he became an adult supervisor in Leader Corps as well. Needless to say, he liked the YMCA.

So when his son Jacen turned seven, registering him at YMCA Wanakita was practically instinctual. But Sean and his wife were unsure if it would be a good fit. It would be his first long-term experience away from home and he was easily categorized as sensitive and emotionally-attached.

So imagine their surprise when they picked Jacen up on the last day of camp. Their boy was beaming. And after one day away from camp, he admitted to missing his new friends. "We knew camp had made a strong impression on him," says Sean. "In fact, it seems like Wanakita made an impact on just about everything he does. He's even clearing the dinner table the 'camp way'!"

With their changed-for-the-better little boy, Sean says he and his wife only have one remaining concern about Jacen—"50 weeks of campsickness!"



## Under 30 and giving above par

### Donor Spotlight: Michael Schwenger Jr.

Michael Schwenger Jr.'s parents had a strong influence on him growing up. "My parents always treated people equally regardless of who they were or where they came from. They also taught me that not everyone may be as fortunate as you and that you need to go out of your way to help those people."

In 2006 Michael decided to begin his own philanthropic efforts by joining the charity board for the Virtual YMCA Program (a program that his own mother had been involved in). Michael chose the Virtual Y Program because he saw it as an opportunity to make a difference in a child's life when they're young and impressionable. He gets great satisfaction in knowing the benefits of supporting this vital after-school program. "Making a difference when they're young means making a difference later in their life too," he says. "Every child deserves a chance to have the life they want and this program gives them that chance."

But Michael's generosity didn't stop with signing a cheque to the Strong Kids Campaign. Back in 2007, Michael, along with his friend Nick Ampas took the initiative on a golf tournament fundraising initiative to raise money for the Virtual Y Program. In the first year, they raised \$14,000.



*Michael Schwenger Jr. believes "every child deserves a chance to have the life they want."*

Four years later, they've raised \$75,000 in total.

At the mere age of 31, Michael has demonstrated that the younger generation of philanthropic-minded people can be just as powerful and effective as their elders. When asked why he feels the YMCA is important to the community, Michael doesn't hesitate. "It's the heartbeat of the community. So many services, all levels, all age groups—without them, there'd be a huge void. It's an organization that lives and breathes community. It's an organization that's able to pull people together for the greater good."

With donors who think like Michael, the YMCA can achieve even greater greater good.

## Brick by brick

### Collaboration is the key to new YMCA facility in Brantford

Great things can happen when people come together with a common goal—great things like the new YMCA/post secondary athletic complex in downtown Brantford. This multi-year initiative and a collective Memorandum of Understanding is the result of several meetings this past spring and summer between many partners. Laurier Brantford, Mohawk College, Nipissing University, Six Nations Elected Council, Six Nations Polytechnic, and YMCA Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford have all come together with a shared vision for the community. This vision will include:

- Improved health and wellness in the Brantford community
- Supporting the educational economic investment that Brantford has made in its downtown
- Optimal operational synergies and efficiencies that will result from the unique partnership.

With your kind support, YMCA Brantford ensures continuous delivery of vital programs and services at our Wellington Street facility while the new complex gets underway. In addition to health and wellness, multiple child care centres and fitness and conditioning, the YMCA is also able to provide fully subsidized Aboriginal after-school programs. As well, it continues to offer invaluable immigration and settlement services for new Canadians in the community.

**YMCA of Hamilton/  
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**Charitable Mission**

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford is a charitable organization helping people achieve personal growth in spirit, mind and body through participation and service to the community.

**Vision**

Creating healthy communities in which individuals and families have opportunities to reach their potential.

**YMCA Core Values**

Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility

**Financial Assistance Statement**

As a charitable organization, the YMCA strives to serve all segments of the community, including those with limited financial means. Donors to the YMCA make this possible.

**Questions? Concerns?**

**Story Suggestions?**

Please direct all feedback and ideas to [sarah\\_banks@ymca.ca](mailto:sarah_banks@ymca.ca) or call 905-317-4941.

Charitable Registration # 10808 3825 RR0001



YMCA

We build strong kids,  
strong families, strong communities.

**YMCA Heritage Club  
inducts 15 new members**



Members of the YMCA Heritage Club have made or planned a gift to the YMCA Endowment Fund. Gifts are kept in perpetuity and invested to generate income that is used to further the work of the YMCA. On September 27th, the YMCA inducted 15 more members. They are as follows:

Christa and Jeff Curran

Lawrence Kwitco

Patrick and Linda O'Grady

Wayne and Pam Perkins

Cathie Skinner-Matteson

Gordon Skinner

Vyrle and Barbara Sisson

Brian and Ria Heagle

Jerry and Stella Andreatta

**Would you rather receive your YMCA  
communications by email?**

Please send your request to [sarah\\_banks@ymca.ca](mailto:sarah_banks@ymca.ca) with "Email Request" in the headline. Be sure to include your full name and mailing address in the body of the email so that we can properly switch your mode of delivery.