

# CELEBRATING OUR MILESTONES AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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## A Fiscal Year-End Update from McGaw YMCA's President/CEO

***The following remarks were presented by President/CEO Monique Parsons at the 138th Annual Meeting on August 8.***

It is an honor to provide this update as the President and CEO of this remarkable organization, which has been serving the Evanston community for over a century. This fiscal year has been filled with incredible milestones and inspiring moments that have brought us closer to our mission of cultivating the whole person, strengthening community, and providing equitable access to transformational experiences that uplift the mind, body, and spirit.

As we reflect on our achievements and set our sights on the future, I'd like to share some of our notable accomplishments and present our vision for the future.

**Membership Growth:** Over the past year, we have experienced significant growth in our membership, with a record number of individuals and families joining and staying with the McGaw YMCA, placing us comfortably within reach of our pre-COVID membership levels.

**Program + Service Expansion:** Through ongoing investment in innovative programs and member services, we have extended our impact to individuals of all ages.

- We regained enrollment at the Children's Center and in Head Start with a 25% increase over last year, reaching full enrollment across all early childhood education programs, matching our pre-pandemic levels.
- We increased the number of school-age youth in our programs, including team sports, camps, MetaMedia, and our School's Out afterschool programs.

- Our FREE summer learning programs made a significant impact, serving over 400 children in grades K through 8.
- We expanded our hours for pickleball and launched a new yoga studio to increase our yoga classes for teens and adults.
- We introduced several new group fitness options, like Body Positive classes, which has led to a 65% increase in participation compared to the same time last year.
- We improved the member experience for families with young children by expanding our Kids Club hours, introducing Family Fun Nights, and adding a variety of new fitness activities, including Zumba for Kids and a youth running club.
- We provided engaging activities for older adults to stay active, socialize, or learn new skills like Spanish or chess.
- And, registrations for swim lessons increased by over 50% compared to the previous year, which marks the highest number of swim lesson participants recorded in our Y's history! This means more people in our lakefront community are equipped with essential swimming and water safety skills.

**Digital Innovation:** In this digital-first era, we value technology to enhance our Y's offerings and accessibility. We launched redesigned websites for [McGaw YMCA](#) and [Camp Echo](#), available in 24 languages, showcasing our commitment to innovative connections with members and the community.

**Community Impact:** We have continued to make a positive impact in our community by providing affordable housing, food distribution, community fitness opportunities, and strong collaborations with partners like Northwestern University, school District 65, and the City of Evanston.

**Equity, Inclusion and Belonging:** Equity is central to our actions, and we're dedicated to fostering an anti-racist culture where all feel welcome and valued. This year, with Board support, we conducted a pay equity analysis to ensure fair pay for staff across departments, focusing on race and gender. We also conducted a comprehensive staff survey to improve workplace culture, emphasizing diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging. Based on feedback, we're implementing initiatives to support staff learning, growth, and mutual support in the coming year.

## Vision for 2024

As we look toward the new fiscal year, we are guided by our strategic priorities and mission, looking for opportunities to do even more to meet the changing needs of our community. Here are a few key things we will be focusing on this year within the scope of our [strategic priorities](#):

### Strengthening Community & Social Responsibility

**Strengthening Community Partnerships:** Collaboration is key to our success. We'll continue to strengthen existing partnerships with Northwestern University, the City of Evanston, and our local school districts while also seeking new partnerships with local organizations and businesses. This will help expand our reach and enable us to deliver more impactful and intentional programs and services that extend beyond our YMCA's walls.

**Men's Residence Renovation:** The quiet phase of our [Men's Residence Renovation Project](#) has been a great success. To date, we have secured city, state, and federal funds for the Men's Residence Renovation, showing confidence in our plans to improve affordable housing options in Evanston. The public capital campaign will launch soon, and we're excited to invite our community to support this much-needed and well-deserved renovation project for our residence facilities!

### Education & Youth Development

**Expansion of BYMOC Initiatives:** Our unwavering focus on youth development will continue, with increased emphasis on boys and young men of color. This year, we'll apply the [YMCA Boys & Young Men of Color \(BYMOC\) Strategy](#) in more of our youth-serving programs to align school participation with workforce development and expand options for high school youth.

**Commemorating 100 Years of Camp Echo:** In 2024, we'll commemorate the 100th year of Camp Echo, a beloved place that has made a lasting impact on countless lives here in Evanston and beyond! The year-long celebration is set to kick-off this fall, and we invite our community to join us in this momentous occasion as we honor the cherished memories and envision an even more dynamic future for the generations of campers who have yet to experience Camp Echo's magic.

## Community Health & Well-being

**Enhancing Wellness and Fitness:** Our mission revolves around the well-being of our community. We are committed to offering comprehensive wellness programs and expanding inclusive fitness options to ensure accessibility and belonging for everyone at our Y. Our focus will be on supporting mental and physical health through fitness programs and educational resources, helping individuals achieve their health goals in spirit, mind, and body.

## Organizational Excellence

**Our Vision is to be a Place of Belonging for All People:** We're committed to becoming that place for all, at every stage of life. From policy changes to facility upgrades like the launch of a new signage & wayfinding project, we're creating an inviting and accessible space that meets the community's evolving needs. Initiatives to improve workplace culture include supporting staff learning and growth, providing more professional development for managers to support the well-being of their staff, and launching Employee Resource Groups to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging.

**Financial Sustainability:** To remain strong and resilient in the evolving landscape of nonprofit funding, we must be thoughtful and proactive in our response to funding changes, increased costs, and community needs. We'll continue to strive for diverse and reliable revenue streams to cover our costs, while being transparent and consistent with the expectations of our organization. Our members and donors play a vital role in helping to keep our mission alive, and we'll focus on nurturing and strengthening these vital relationships.

As we celebrate our past achievements and look to the future, the McGaw YMCA has profoundly impacted countless lives in our community. From young children finding a nurturing space to grow, to middle-school youth and teens becoming changemakers, to adults and families embracing health and wellness—we see the transformative power of the YMCA every day.

Looking ahead, we'll stay true to our mission and strategic priorities as we work to create a lasting impact in the lives of those we serve. We remain committed to responding to and prioritizing the needs of our community, while maintaining transparency in communicating the impact of our efforts. With the support of our dedicated staff and volunteers, committed members, generous donors, community partners, and neighbors, we look forward to serving Evanston for another century, and beyond!

We invite you to join us! Together, we can continue to be that place where lives are transformed, and sparks are ignited.

Thank you for being a part of this extraordinary journey!

Monique Parsons

President/CEO  
McGaw YMCA

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