



Y WE'RE HERE



YMCA of Rock River Valley

2022 **IMPACT REPORT**

OUR MISSION

To put Christian principles into practice through programs, services and relationships that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

OUR VALUES



CARING



HONESTY



RESPECT



RESPONSIBILITY



FAITH

DEAR FRIENDS:

Sometimes we refer to the “benefit” of COVID being a “giant reset button” for our Y. While we wouldn’t ask for the past two years again, we do recognize a gift we have been given – the opportunity to think about our why and rebuild programs that serve our community through our Y.

As we reflect on our purpose in this community, we think of words like “belonging” and “access” and “everyone” and know that our ultimate goal is to bring all people in our community, who wish to be here, into the Y family. Once they’re here, our members can access enriching, engaging programming that helps each of us achieve our God-given potential. That’s **Y We’re Here!**

As you read through this report to our community, we hope you share our joy over both the seemingly small and obviously big successes our members have seen. Sometimes, the things that appear small are really life-changing – like the ability to go to PE class with your classmates instead of being singled out for a special class. In the end, we all just want to belong – and that’s **Y We’re Here.**

Thank you to our members, donors, and partners who make serving our community so rewarding.

*If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

1 Corinthians 12: 27



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BUILDING CONFIDENCE

SWIM LESSONS



“If someone would have told me in a year, he would dive into the deep end and swim the whole length of the pool... I would have said, ‘I appreciate your optimism. If you can get my son to put his head underwater and not panic – that is what I’m looking for,’” said Tammy.

Not everyone learns and develops at the same pace. Even swim lessons are not one size fits all. Tammy and Jason Vodnansky wanted their 7-year-old son, David, to be water safe, but as mom said, “David wasn’t having it.”

He was afraid of the water – especially floating.

“He is very strong-willed and opinionated. He tends to do things on his own timeline,” said Tammy, David’s mom.

Navigating David’s timeline was something his parents had learned to accommodate over the years. At four years old, David was referred to an occupational therapist.

“He really struggled with keeping up with kids his own age,” said Tammy. “He would become easily tired. He was good at telling us, ‘I’m tired. I need a nap.’”

The therapist said his core muscles were underdeveloped – something called low tone. They activated an Individual Education Plan (IEP) at school that provided an adapted gym class.

“Children with low muscle tone need to spend so much mental energy making their bodies do what they want that it pulls attention from developing other skills, such as speech and walking on time. That was a turning point for us,” said Tammy.

The pandemic silver lining and a little “divine intervention” as Tammy calls it led them to private lessons with Deb Waldo at the Northeast Family YMCA.

“I could tell he had some sensory issues, so one of the first things I recommended to his mom was to get him earplugs,” said Deb, private swim instructor at the Y. “The difference was like night and day. He would finally put his face and ears in the water. He would float on his back.”

Soon, Deb, who has a degree in Kinesiology, began working with David on building his strength.

1985

REGISTRATIONS

1158

SWIMMERS

192

PRIVATE LESSONS



"We did things that forced him to work his core more – like jumping into the water and climbing out of the pool," said Deb.

But, more importantly, Deb worked on building a relationship with David. She listened to his needs so he would trust her.

"Sometimes he's the teacher and sometimes I'm the teacher because that is what he needs," said Deb. "Sometimes he gets me to walk like a penguin or swim like a shark. It makes him more confident to be teaching me something."

Her method worked. David swims several laps at a time, is learning to dive, is working on new strokes, and has goals to be on the swim team.

"If someone would have told me in a year, he would dive into the deep end and swim the whole length of the pool... I would have said, 'I appreciate your optimism. If you can get my son to put his head underwater and not panic – that is what I'm looking for,'" said Tammy.

David's improved confidence and strength has been noticed outside of the pool, too. David is no longer in adapted gym class.

"When he returned for the new school year, the teacher commented, 'Wow, swim lessons must have made a huge difference because he's a completely different kid,' remembers Tammy. "When we afford kids the space to be themselves, within reason, that's when we see their individuality, their creativity and their natural skills blossom. When we try to mainstream everyone down the same road, some kids will adapt and some won't. That isolates some kids. I really am hopeful this experience will continue to be a positive one and one day he'll find a spot on a team," said Tammy.



REACHING THEIR POTENTIAL

TEEN REACH

There is a sense of urgency right now to help our youth. We know that our students are struggling in school and that youth crime rates are on the rise.

"Helping kids is our duty. We want better for kids growing up," said Evelyn Fuentes, Teen REACH site coordinator for the YMCA. "There is a lot of poverty and violence in our community right now, but there are kids with potential."

A partnership with Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd opened doors for the Y to expand its reach into west Rockford. We started running youth and teen programs at the church, located directly across the street from West Middle School, in 2021. The students can walk across the street and into a nurturing place, right after school.

Teen REACH is funded through a grant from the State of Illinois. REACH stands for responsibility, education, achievement, caring and hope. The Y serves 55 youth on average per day with mentoring, tutoring, career exploration, college readiness, and financial literacy.

Mickayla and Matthew are siblings who use the program. Their mom, Shannon Joslin, recalls many visits to the principal's office in elementary school for her daughter.

"My daughter has ADHD and ODD and with that comes a lot of anger," said Shannon. "The program has helped her calm down. She has people she can talk to and that she enjoys spending time with."

The program runs on a schedule each day to give the youth free time and structured guidance. The goal is to build relationships and create a safe environment for the youth to reach their potential. Evelyn says she has seen great improvement in the kids' maturity and social emotional development.

"When we first opened, Mickayla would have 2-3 meltdowns a week," said Evelyn. "We have seen such a change in her. She



doesn't do that anymore. She knows how to talk through her anger and help us find a solution to help her."

When Matthew started the program, he was a new student at West and didn't have many friends.

"At the beginning of summer, Matthew was shy and reserved. He was hesitant to engage with other kids," said Evelyn. "He was drawn to foosball and he is really good. To this day, he is undefeated. That game helped him gain confidence and build relationships. By the end of summer, we noticed him really come out of his shell."

Matthew's mom says he has taken those relationships to high school this year and started the year off on a positive note. While Shannon says her kids have definitely benefited from the program, it's more the feeling of safety that she values.

"At the beginning of summer, Matthew was shy and reserved. He was hesitant to engage with other kids," said Evelyn. "He was drawn to foosball and he is really good. To this day, he is undefeated. That game helped him gain confidence and build relationships. By the end of summer, we noticed him really come out of his shell."

"They're safe, they're loved, they're liked, and they're taken care of," said Shannon. "They are protected at the Y program. For me, that relieves a lot of stress. I don't have to worry about where my child is and what they're doing, and I appreciate that."

Evelyn, who grew up in the neighborhood, understands firsthand the importance of this program.

"My sister and I were home for a couple of hours every day after school, waiting for my mom," remembers Evelyn. "I would have loved a program like this growing up. I was the first one in my family to go to college and we really had no idea what to do. I love being a part of a program that is giving back to my old neighborhood. We are a resource and we're here for them."



151,390

**SNACKS AND MEALS
SERVED**

90

**YOUTH IN
TEEN REACH**

960

**YOUTH IN
KIDS' TIME**

FOCUSING ON HEALTH

THE DANIEL PLAN



Michelle Linksy grew up coming to the Y. When she got into a car accident in 2003 and broke her ankle, her life changed. She found it hard to motivate herself. In 2021, she had enough and decided it was time to make a change.

"I was tired all the time and out of breath," said Michelle, a YMCA member. "It was hard for me to go up and down the stairs at work and my back was hurting. I was tired of feeling the way I was feeling."

Michelle chose to try The Daniel Plan, a 10-week healthy living program based on five essentials - faith, food, fitness, focus and friends.

"Faith and friends are the secret sauce," said Joy Bohn, The Daniel Plan coordinator. "When you have a community with similar goals working together combined with faith in God - it really comes together at the end of the 10 weeks to give you a strong foundation."

The group meets weekly for lessons on the five essentials, group discussion, short workouts and health assessments. They even had a text string where they would send motivational quotes, recipes, and meet up at grocery stores to shop together.

"I needed to be in a program where I could learn how to eat better and exercise appropriately," said Michelle. "I needed accountability because I have a hard time making myself come in."

The Daniel Plan is about abundance, not deprivation. That's why the program is both transformational and sustainable. It's not an interim diet; it's a practical lifestyle program that encourages participants to take a step at a time in the right direction.

"God wants us to honor our bodies and take care of bodies by



fueling it with proper nutrition,” said Joy. “The program teaches you to eat food made from God – not man made in a plant, but grown from plants.”

“I used to fry a lot of my food, but I’ve learned that I like roasted vegetables – it’s healthier,” said Michelle.

Joy shared their goal for Michelle was to get her moving more and to establish good eating habits. The changes she made had a huge impact on her health.

“By the end of the program, she started incorporating workouts, she lost 10 pounds and she lowered her sugar levels allowing her to stretch out her doctor appointments from 4 to 6 months. It reversed the effects of her diabetes – all by food,” said Joy.

“My A1C used to be a 7 or above and it went down to 6.7,” shared Michelle with pride. “This last appointment, it went from a 6.7 down to a 6.0!”

While proud of her wins, Michelle said she is a work in progress and still has goals to achieve, which is why she signed up for another session of The Daniel Plan.

“I want to have more endurance and stamina so I don’t get so out of breath, can walk longer, and not be in as much pain with my back,” said Michelle.



“By the end of the program, she started incorporating workouts, she lost 10 pounds and she lowered her sugar levels allowing her to stretch out her doctor appointments from 4 to 6 months. It reversed the effects of her diabetes – all by food,” said Joy.

461,210

VISITS

40%

**MEMBERSHIP
GROWTH**

71.9

**NET PROMOTER
SCORE***

**HIGH-PERFORMING Ys SCORE ABOVE 70*

A NEW WAY OF MEASURING SUCCESS

WE FEEL AN URGENCY TO ACT NOW

55%

**KINDERGARTNERS
MEETING OR EXCEEDING
BENCHMARKS**

64%

**GRADUATION RATE FOR RPS
205 COMPARED TO 86%
STATE AVERAGE**

100%

**INCREASE IN YOUTH CRIME
FROM 2019 TO 2020**

1500

**CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE
IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY**



“As they grow, young people with strong social and emotional capacities are better prepared for college or careers, experience better mental health and social functioning, and report a greater sense of overall well-being. Social and emotional learning is at the center of our work with young people — this tool is helping us ensure they have everything they need to navigate their world.”

**-Rachel Latham, Executive Director
YMCA Camp Winnebago**

While these statistics are important and give us a sense of a young person’s academic preparedness – we know there is more to this story. We needed to shine a light on the non-academic aspects of life. In order to thrive, young people need to develop a positive sense of self, set and achieve goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. These capacities are commonly called social and emotional learning.

We launched a pilot program at Camp Winnebago for the Hello Insight tool. Hello Insight uses the term capacities because it describes a young person’s potential for growth rather than an end-state. We surveyed the youth at the beginning of summer and at the end. Below are their results. This tool will be used across youth programs in 2022 to ensure we’re making the most impact with kids in the areas they need most.

Capacities	Percent who showed growth
Self Management.....	50%
Desire to Learn.....	42%
Academic Self-Efficacy.....	75%
Social Skills.....	58%

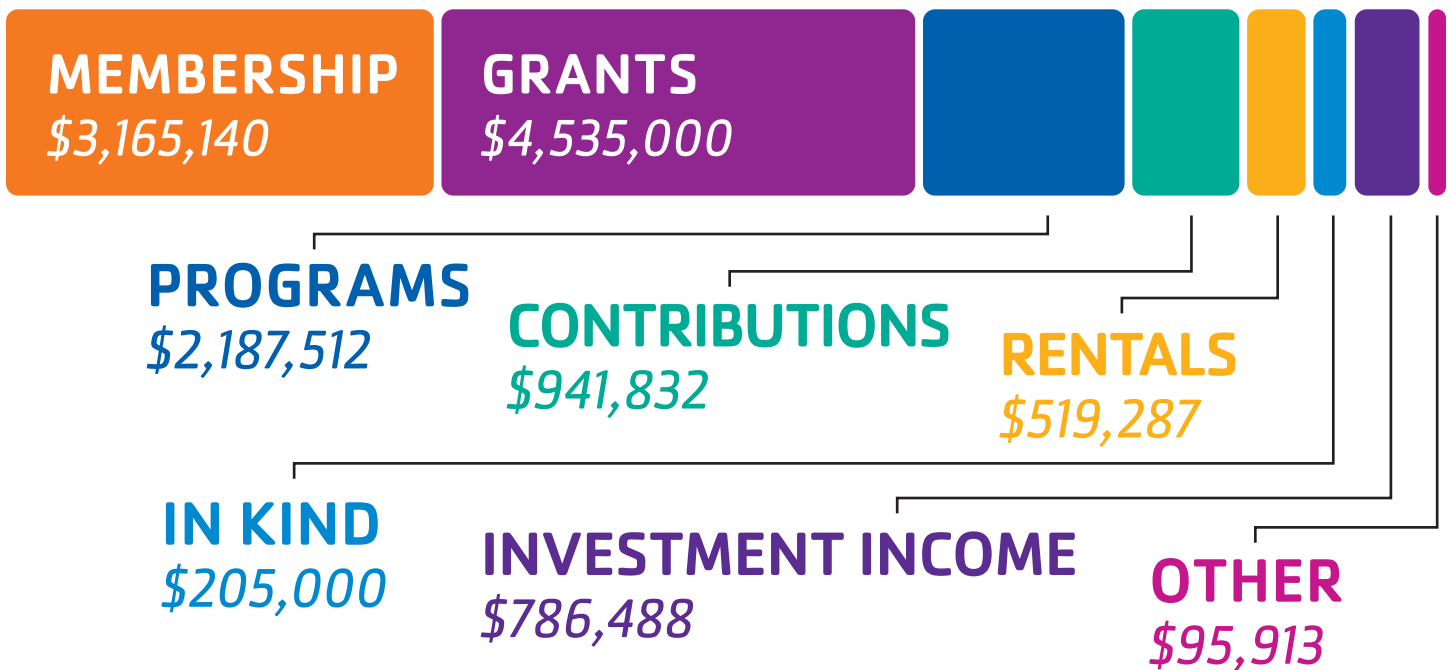
88%

OVERALL IMPACT
PARTICIPANTS WHO GREW IN
AT LEAST ONE CAPACITY

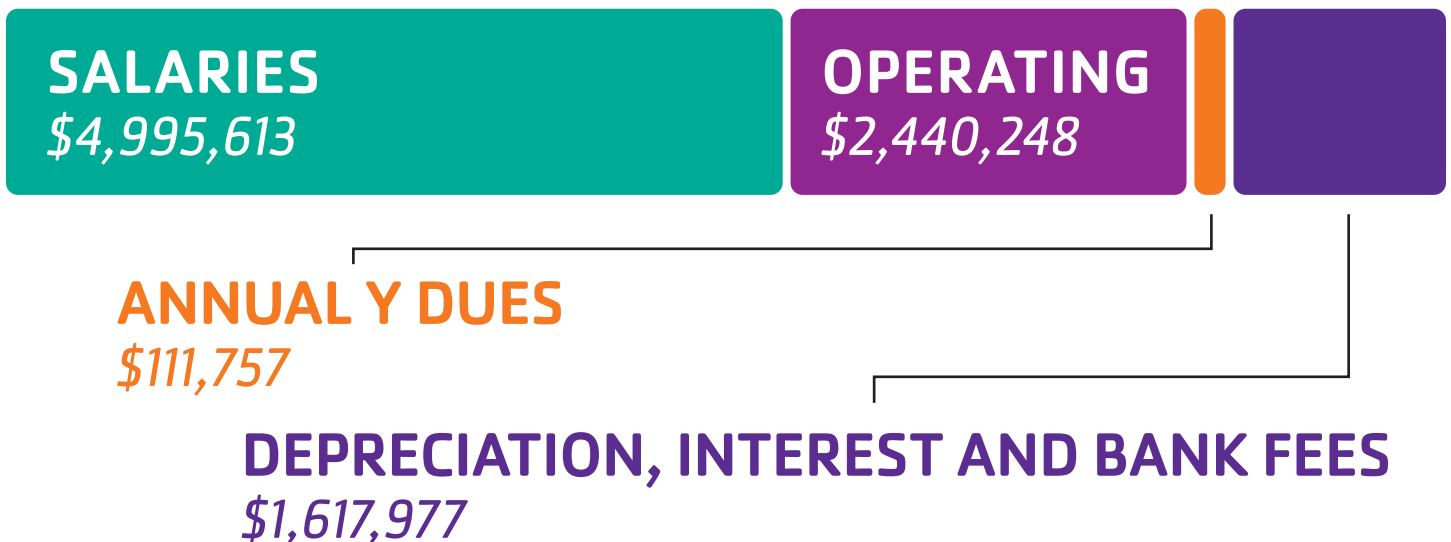


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2021 EXPENSES: \$9,165,595 UNAUDITED FINANCIALS



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From the very start of the YMCA of Rock River Valley, generous friends have recognized the value of the Y's mission and have vowed to support it into the future. Heritage Club members have indicated their commitment to remembering the YMCA of Rock River Valley in their estate plans. Through the Heritage Club, we can show our appreciation to these members for their generosity and foresight. For information about the Heritage Club, contact the Mission Advancement department.

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