**DIG CHAIR APPOINTED TO NATIONAL GCE STEERING AND STRATEGY COUNCIL**

DIG Committee Chair Joe Sprague has been appointed to the Y-USA Global Centers of Excellence Steering and Strategy Council (SSC). Joe is excited to join the new 24-member SSC and help guide strategic decision making and have direct involvement in expanding the Global Centers of Excellence Model.

Global Centers of Excellence (GCEs) are YMCAs that fully integrate diversity and inclusion practices and global strategies across key operational and programmatic areas. The GCE model plays a key role in leading the Y movement to apply diversity, inclusion, and global best practices in membership, programs, leadership development, resource mobilization, and communications and branding.

The YMCA of Metropolitan Denver was approved as a GCE three years ago. There are now 68 GCE Ys across the country.

**ABOUT DIG**

Led by YMCA trustees, YMCA of Metropolitan Denver representatives, community volunteers, and University of Denver interns, the Diversity, Inclusion, and Global Strategies Committee is dedicated to ensuring that everybody feels welcome at the YMCA. To learn more please contact Debbie Ford at dford@denverymca.org

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Joe Sprague, DIG Chairman
YMCA of Metro Denver, Trustee
Kristie Braunen
Littleton Family YMCA
Board Member
Linda Diederichsen
YMCA of Metro Denver, Staff
Bob Divers
Littleton Family YMCA
Board Member
Kaylee Dolson
Community Member
Dave Ferrill
YMCA of Metro Denver, Trustee
Debbie Ford, DIG Coordinator
YMCA of Metro Denver
Gillian Grant
Schisselman Family YMCA
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Rhonda Harrisburger
Community Member
Julie Hill
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Bob Johnston
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Nancy Joseph-Gould
Division Denver YMCA
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Barb Kelley
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Robin Kiggins
YMCA of Metro Denver, Staff
Gary Kring
Glendale Sports Center
YMCA Board Member
Joe Kovalcheck
Southwest Family YMCA
Executive Director
Patricia Lauster
Susan M. Duncan YMCA
Board Member
James (Jim) McCluskey
YMCA of Metro Denver
Emeritus Board
Marissa Shoback
Denver Public Schools
Rachel Sloan
Aurora Family YMCA, Staff
Joan Richardson
Community Programs Branch
Executive Director
Helen Ritzler
Southwest Family YMCA
Dana Wedlick
Schisselman Family YMCA, Staff
Dianne Wittkauf
Community Member

**WELCOME FROM DIG**

The YMCA Diversity, Inclusion, and Global Strategies (DIG) Committee strengthens the Y's commitment to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive through the YMCA. Here we’re pleased to share news about our activities and programs.

**WHAT IF WE ALL HULA HOOPED TOGETHER?**

People all over the world would be united in having fun and giving back. It’s the vision of World Hoop Day, an organization and event that promotes the importance of play and encourages people to share in a common goal – hooping together to support communities and foster peace. To get more people to hoop on this special day, the organization donates hoops internationally as a cost-effective “portable gym” that helps people build core strength and self-confidence.

At the Schisselman YMCA Preschool, World Hoop Day was a natural supplement to the new preschool curriculum, Friends at Home and Abroad, presented by Bryna Rabehl, a graduate intern from the University of Denver–Josef Korbel School of International Studies and a World Hoop Day Ambassador. Focusing on education and fun, the curriculum teaches children about other countries and cultures through music, games, dance, and art, and gives them opportunities to interact with kids around the globe.

As a YMCA program, the Schisselman preschool also helps children learn skills in teamwork and acceptance and take part in activities that promote healthy living. “World Hoop Day was an opportunity to further bring our curriculum to life,” said Rabehl. “And, even better, hula hooping is just plain fun.”

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WELCOMING REFUGEES IN AURORA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

To help immigrant and refugee students and their families make a successful transition to their new school and community, the DIG Committee partnered with Aurora Public Schools, providing program and curriculum support and volunteers to lead the International Family Engagement Event Series.

More than 200 children from all over the world participated in the series, which was designed to provide sensitive, appropriate, and fun activities for K-8 students, while teaching parents and older siblings how school systems work in the United States.

At three half-day events, YMCA volunteers and interns led crafts, sports, and hula hooping to bring together students and families who spoke over 15 languages, including Burmese, Nepali, Somali, Spanish, and Arabic.

IT’S A Y WORLD!

MEETING “FRIENDS ABROAD” IN SOUTH AFRICA
By DIG Committee Chair, Joe Sprague

While traveling in South Africa, I had the privilege of visiting the Soweto YMCA in Johannesburg. There I experienced first-hand the purpose of our Friends Abroad program — sharing ideas and common values.

In learning about their culture, I saw a life-size, framed photograph of Nelson Mandela at the Y’s gym, where he trained as a boxer. And I had the pleasure of observing the internationally acclaimed singing and dancing group AFRICA UMOJA in rehearsal.

Moreover, I saw how this Y, just like the YMCA of Metro Denver, reaches out to bridge gaps in their community. I learned about the Y-Justice program, which engages at-risk young people and gives them ways to transform their futures. Through a Y-Zone program, they give kids positive interactions in after-school care, building their self-esteem, and providing support to single-parents and busy families. And through Y-Fit, they provide a low-cost means for people to exercise and live healthy, while raising money to support other aspects of the Y.

My visit showed me how, despite being oceans apart, YMCAs serve their communities in the same ways. It showed me that we all share values — and even memories. I met again a staff member who had been to the 18th World Council in Estes Park in 2014, and remembered the warm welcome she received from the Denver YMCA greeting committee at the airport. It made me realize again: It is a Y world.

A SMALL WORLD. A SHARED COMMITMENT.
Partnering with the Nicaragua YMCA

"Wherever the YMCA has a presence, programs are developed to meet the unique needs of the community."

DIG Committee member, Dave Ferrill, shared this thought after getting a first-hand look at the Nicaragua YMCA and their powerful humanitarian and strategic programs.

Dave was part of a visit to the Nicaragua Y by the Y-USA delegation, which included representation from the Denver Y and other Ys from across the nation. Our Denver representatives, including two YMCA Trustees, Joe Sprague and Dave Ferrill, and Debbie Ford the DIG Coordinator.

Common values, common goals

The delegation saw how the work of the YMCA is universal — supporting communities and bridging gaps in health and resources. The Nicaragua YMCA CEO, Carlos Amador and their Board Chair Marvin Granera said in Nicaragua the focus is on economic, community, and sustainable development. The need is great, and the Y’s support is a difference maker.

Our Denver representatives learned about the Nicaragua Y’s programs, including:

- Land Bank, which supports poor families in working their land and regaining their livelihoods
- A center to educate homeless youth and provides a safe place for them to stay
- A “seed bank” for farmers that provides a means for them to support themselves and feed their families
- Clean water by building wells in remote areas

Through an official partnership that started in 2013, the YMCA of Metro Denver has supported the Nicaragua YMCA in Boaco, and Rivas.

Powerful and inspirational

During the 5 day visit, DIG Committee members developed a new appreciation for the Y’s shared values and concerted efforts.

Dave concluded, “This Y is a wonderful example of how the Y sets itself apart in serving people. It was a life-changing visit to an organization that is changing lives.”

The visit was coordinated by Renata Ferrari, Senior Director for Global Advancement, International Group of Y-USA.