

LEADING AND LEARNING WITH Ys NATIONWIDE



Denver Y, Y-USA staff and Y volunteers shared their commitment to the DIG work in Denver.

In February, over 1,200 YMCA professionals from across the country gathered in Denver to learn about local and national initiatives to advance the Y mission.

The Denver Y showcased local Y programs and initiatives, including:

PEACEFUL SCHOOLS AND MENTORING

The Aurora YMCA highlighted Peaceful Schools which through a partnership with the Rotary Club creates an anti-bullying environment for elementary students and provides leadership opportunities for high school students. Reach and Rise Mentoring is an ongoing program, which provides role models and guidance for at-risk teens.

FRIENDS ABROAD

This program encourages YMCA partners, friends and volunteers who travel abroad to connect with Ys internationally and then come home to share their experiences.

DIG COMMITTEE

The Denver Y shared information on how to create a DIG Committee, emphasizing that the DIG principles are relevant to every Y.

There were many visitors to the booth, including Nico Gourdet and Adriana Stanovici of Y-USA. Discussions about starting a DIG Committee were continued when DIG Committee members and Denver Y CEO Jim Hiner dined with Andy Corley, Ryan Knapper, and Catherine Army of the Sioux YMCA. The Sioux Y is in the process of developing a DIG Committee – and it was energizing to hear about their progress.

The EXPO provided an excellent opportunity for the YMCA of Metro Denver and the DIG Committee to showcase our work. More importantly, it was a chance to share with other Ys and help promote diversity, inclusion, and global outreach.

ABOUT DIG

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

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ASO, Staff

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YMCA of Metro Denver, Board of Trustee

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ASO, Staff

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THANK YOU DIG SUPPORTERS!

When caring people and organizations open their hearts it helps the YMCA open our arms. We extend our gratitude to these generous supporters:

“Your Cause” Thrivent Foundation sponsored by Rhonda Harshbarger – \$250

South Jeffco Rotary sponsored by Liz Rowland – \$500



YMCA's Debbie Ford (left) receives check from President of South Jeffco Rotary, Kris Clute.



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BRIDGE BUILDER

A newsletter of the YMCA of Metro Denver's
Diversity, Inclusion, and Global (DIG) Innovation YMCA
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DENVER AND URUGUAY YMCAS: Sharing Time, Sharing Ideas

The YMCA of Metropolitan Denver has a long-standing relationship with the YMCA of Uruguay. Out of the friendship came an opportunity for Denver Y staff to visit Uruguay and share best practices in engaging families and strengthening communities.

Last February, Amy Louvier (far right), Aurora Family YMCA Youth Center Program Director, and Claire Eades (right), Schlessman Family YMCA Youth & Family Programs Director, participated in a weeklong cultural exchange with the Y in Uruguay, arranged in part by Director General Jesús Ithurralde. Amy and Claire visited the Central Program Center at Y Montevideo, the branch of Y Portonnes, and the Teen Program Center. They also spent four days at Campamento Artigas, where summer camp was in full swing.

At the Central Program Center, Amy and Claire shared some of the favorite activities of the Denver Y. Amy led a yoga class, and at the residential Camp Artigas Amy and Claire assisted counselors. A bond they discovered that transcended borders was a love of the film Pitch Perfect, which resulted in a group singalong over dinner.

Amy and Claire returned with many ideas, which they have begun to incorporate. Amy noticed how well the Uruguay Y uses their space and has adapted the model to the Aurora Teen Center. Claire was impressed with the Uruguay YMCA's resourceful use of supplies – building a stage with curtains, string lights and parachutes that allowed for a shadow puppet show and a guitar and percussion performance.

It was a successful trip of sharing, and the Denver Y is looking forward to returning the hospitality with a visit from the Y Uruguay in the near future.



Claire and Amy present a plaque to Jesús Ithurralde, CEO of YMCA Uruguay for hosting the Denver YMCA.



A young camper shows off her handiwork at Campamento Artigas.

Make A World of Difference

The DIG Committee of the YMCA of Metro Denver is committed to gaining a better understanding of the world around us. Support our work with under-served communities and help us respond to key issues in Denver by making a tax deductible donation at www.DenverYMCA.org/Donate.

PARTNERING AND WELCOMING YMCA & Aurora Public Schools Engage Student Refugees



They came from all over speaking a wealth of languages – Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, French, Hebrew, Swahili and more. Over 50 students from kindergarten to 7th grade who have made new homes in America enjoyed a morning of creativity, sports, sharing and learning.

In April, the YMCA joined Aurora Public Schools for the International Family Engagement Event. Here, the Y led activities from relay racing, hula-hooping, cup stacking, and soccer, to arts and crafts and education. YMCA DIG volunteer Karla Gomez-Meyer taught kids how to make an origami envelope, and all the children and volunteers enjoyed a magic show by Keir Mathur (right).

SHARING THEIR WORLDS

In one of the quieter Y activities, students highlighted their shared experience of coming to the United States. They were given world and USA maps along with a blank flag. They colored their home country on the world map and flag, and drew things that reminded them of where they came from.

Jessica Brown of the Aurora Family YMCA reported that a third grader from the Congo happily colored his flag and talked about the animals of his native country: Cheetahs and mountain gorillas.



Jessica also added that another student, who spoke very little English, grabbed her hand and led her to the coloring table. Together, with little communication except for the word “beautiful,” they drew and colored butterflies. “We had a great time together and really enjoyed each other’s company.”

Silvia Tamminen, coordinator of the Aurora Public Schools Welcome Center, thanked the YMCA and remarked on the “wonderful” and ongoing partnership in this outreach to refugee students and families. Indeed, the goal of making the new students have fun and feel welcome was achieved.



WELCOMING THE LBGTQ COMMUNITY

Inclusive. Kind. Welcoming.

In the spirit of the DIG Committee and the YMCA, we’re proud to sponsor a booth at the 2018 Denver PrideFest and join in the celebration of community, heritage, family and culture. Our participation is a testament to Y-USA’s commitment to LBGTQ priorities as well as one of the first acts of outreach by the newly formed DIG LBGTQ sub-committee.

Come visit us in the Family Area, June 16 and 17 in Civic Center Park!

TOGETHERHOOD: Improving Communities Together



Arvada YMCA volunteers Layne Mielke and Jen O'Brien deliver winter clothing supplies to Martha M. Pittaluga (center) at Fitzmorris Elementary School

People are often isolated from neighbors, connecting only digitally or not at all. At the same time, community needs continue to grow, surpassing the available resources. One YMCA program that is addressing both these factors is Togetherhood.

Togetherhood™ activates Y members in planning and leading community improvement projects. It is a movement of highly engaged members who use their creativity, passion and hard work to transform communities.

“Our members are developing great friendships and bringing those friendships back to the Y.”

–Jen Spettel, Executive Director, Arvada YMCA

At several branches of the YMCA of Metro Denver, the work of Togetherhood volunteers and Y staff advisors has been tremendous:

DOWNTOWN Y

Volunteers joined the Denver Rescue Mission in serving meals last fall.

ARVADA Y

Over the past year, Y volunteers participated in clean-up days along Ralston Creek Trail at the Arvada Reservoir and at the Horse Protection League, winter supply drives for 200 elementary school students.

LITTLETON Y

Volunteers participated in a food drive with Arty’s Friday Food Program, a collaboration of the Rotary Club and the Littleton community to ensure 70 students at Centennial Academy have food for weekends.

The benefits of Togetherhood are many. For Y members, volunteering improves well-being, forges strong relationships and provides an outlet to discover purpose. For Denver communities, Togetherhood leverages the Y’s powerful network to create a stronger and more connected society.

New Togetherhood volunteers are always welcome. Come help the Y do more. For information, visit www.denverymca.org/togetherhood

WHO KNEW? NOW YOU DO!

How Denver Y branches are advancing Diversity, Inclusion and Global Initiatives

ARVADA

Through the “Togetherhood” program at the YMCA, volunteers contributed to the Arvada Food Bank Backpack Program and did a supply drive for Ralston House, a not-for-profit agency that provides a friendly and safe place for child and teen survivors of abuse.

AURORA

This summer the Y will offer Respite Recreation for kids with sensory and cognitive impairments.

DOWNTOWN

The Downtown YMCA is working with the International Rescue Committee to introduce refugees to community-based health and wellness programs.

LITTLETON

The Y is offering Language Instruction Programs in Russian, Spanish and English.

METRO DENVER

The YMCA is collaborating with the International Rescue Committee to provide an eight-week summer day camp program for refugee kids.

SCHLESSMAN

Launched Caregiver and Me Adaptive Yoga classes for caregivers and special needs companions.

SOUTHWEST

Partnering with The Haven, a residential substance abuse program, the Southwest YMCA is providing weekly Y fitness classes for participants in the program.