



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# CREATING BRIGHTER FUTURES & TRANSFORMING LIVES

MERIDEN YMCA  
ANNUAL REPORT

[www.meridenymca.org](http://www.meridenymca.org)



Dear friends,

A few weeks ago, I saw a wonderful physical therapist that we collaborate with on water therapy programs. She was in the pool working with a teenager from one of our local schools.

As we chatted, the physical therapist got very excited as did the young woman. "Those are her first steps!!!!!!" said Heather. When most people think of first steps they think of a toddler learning to walk. This young woman has been in a wheelchair her whole life. She took her first steps, as a teenager, in the pool at the Meriden YMCA. To help her continue and to exercise with her family, we gave her a three month family membership.

At the Meriden YMCA we create brighter futures and transform lives in big ways and small every single day. That's why I am excited about the work we do. Read on to learn why we are more than a gym. We're a cause.

## OUR MISSION

The Meriden YMCA seeks to become a "master link" in our community, connecting needs to resources, people to programs, possibilities to potentials and enhance the quality of life for all people who live and work here.

## OUR PROMISE

As the area's leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y uses our funds (membership and program dues, grants, donations) to make a meaningful, enduring impact right in your own neighborhood.



John Benigni, CEO

Did you know...



Meriden YMCA

serves

**18,200**

out of  
population  
of 60,638

In 2013 the  
Meriden YMCA  
employed

**298**

employees.

# FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

**We nurture the potential in every child.**

The Meriden YMCA offers programs that provide kids with the building blocks for life, creating brighter futures.

**“Jordan and Joshua have made outstanding progress in the Reading Rocks program!”**

**— Mr. Dan Crispino, Reading Rocks teacher**

“My boys have delays and needed help with reading. When my baby went there (to the Reading Rocks tutoring program at the Meriden YMCA) he really could not read. I was totally afraid at the beginning that the teacher would not be welcoming to that fact.

Mr. C has done a wonderful job with my boys. He’s dedicated, supportive, listens and understands their needs. Mr. C is not scared to take on anything. He is happy go lucky and is welcoming. He caters the lessons to a child’s needs. I wish there was a Mr. C for math too! It is hard to gather the money for tutoring but I put other needs aside to keep the boys in the program.”

— Michelle Silva, mother of Jordan and Joshua

**1,800 children participated in our many youth sports programs building athletic, social and interpersonal skills, learned to express themselves through play and creativity in our theater, dance, clay and drawing programs, and enriched their learning with reading tutoring and Spanish programs.**



# FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

We develop the potential in every child.



The Meriden YMCA provides safe nurturing child care to help children from infants through middle school age learn, grow and thrive. At the Y, children and teens learn values and positive behaviors, explore their unique talents and interests, and are given the opportunity to realize their potential.

**Last year we cared for 764 children in our safe, nurturing child care programs while moms and dads work and 63% of these families receive some type of financial assistance.**

"Mary-Jo has been with me every step of the way, through every difficulty with my son getting diagnosed with autism. I love my son's teachers. He is so happy to go to school every day. He has flourished there. It will be so hard to leave when it is time to go to kindergarten." – Maria, mom of Alexander who attends preschool at the Meriden YMCA Martin Gaffey Child Care Center. Mary-Jo DiPasquale is the Child Care Director at the Meriden YMCA Martin Gaffey Child Care Center and BAMMY Award winner for Best Child Care Director. Photo courtesy of Chris Zajac and the Record-Journal.

**"My son Alexander has flourished in Mary-Jo's program. I adore Mary-Jo. She is like a family member."**

— Maria

Another preschool program at the Meriden YMCA is the Head Start program. The program served 165 children over the course of the year. There were 98% income eligible and 2% over income families.

Here is Antoinette Gatling with one of her students. Antoinette is the 2013 Outstanding Educator Award Winner from the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children. See pages 10-11 for more information about the Meriden YMCA Head Start program.



# FOR HEALTHY LIVING

We work to help improve the health and well-being of our members.

## Danny's story — 465 to 261 pounds and still going!

Danny joined the Y for the pool because he was looking for a way to exercise that is easy on the joints. Danny's starting weight: 465 pounds.

"I was always heavy. Then I got really big. My dad is diabetic. I was on seven medications and had high blood pressure. I did not want to become diabetic.

I looked into surgery. I was a candidate for new procedure called the gastric sleeve. In order to have surgery I had to lose 40 pounds first. I lost 60. After the surgery I lost 100 pounds in a month and I've been losing ever since thanks to a healthier diet and regular exercise at the Y.

My family is from Puerto Rico. We still have all the food at the celebrations. The food doesn't change, my habits have changed. I pick out what I can eat.

I am now down to 261 pounds and my goal weight is between 200 and 220. I am off all of the medications and my blood pressure is normal now.

I still love going in the pool but now that I've lost weight I can exercise out of the pool too and do cardio. This morning I took the Insanity class. This is my sixth or seventh time doing it. I like it. I try to do morning classes a couple times a week and then I go in the sauna and the pool."



**"My advice to someone who is just starting out trying to lose weight is to go for it. Do a little at a time increase it bit by bit every day. Plug away at it and keep going. It's worth it."**

**— Danny**

# FOR HEALTHY LIVING

**We work to help improve the health and well-being of our members.**

P.A.C.E. (Physical Activity Changes Everything)

The PACE program teaches children and their parents who are obese or are at risk how to create a new healthier future.

"I was obese as a child. My mom and siblings were too. I did not want this for my daughter. I am worried it is in her lining due to her family genes.

Although I try hard to eat healthy at home, my daughter would not eat vegetables. She is a preteen and I know it becomes more challenging with your weight as you become a teenager and your body changes.

This program is so amazing, so powerful, really helpful to both of us. Carrie is very interactive with the children and knows how to keep them engaged and get them to understand how to improve their health. She gave me great strategies that worked to get my daughter to try new foods. Now we both read labels carefully when we shop, weigh things and portion them out and order healthy food when we go out to eat. My daughter keeps me on track!

Carrie taught us how to make healthy lasagna, how to stay active, use flavor to prepare my favorite southern foods in a healthier way, drink more water, cut out sugar, get down to 1% milk and more."

**Every household needs this program. We can still eat healthy on a small budget. If you get a person healthy you get their body and their mind healthy. There is no looking back. We are staying with it. I am so thankful and appreciative for this program." — Althilia Moore**



**More than 75 children and their families learned to live healthier lifestyles and started the path to a healthier future through our PACE program to fight childhood obesity.**

**Over 1,500 pounds were lost by our Biggest Winner Weight Loss Challenge participants!**

**The Meriden YMCA gave \$101,235 in membership scholarships.**

# FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**When we give back to our community by actively supporting our neighbors, it creates opportunities for kids, adults and families in our community.**

“When my granddaughter Erika started preschool at the Meriden YMCA she was withdrawn. After going to preschool, after school care, gymnastics and camp she is a totally different child and is a heck of a lot more outgoing! Erika is an only child. The Y is one big family to her. She feels safe there and can flourish beyond her potential. The Meriden YMCA has always been there for us and I appreciate everything the Y has done for Erika. The Y has changed her life.”

**1,600 children had the summer of their lives at our Mountain Mist Day Camp at traditional, specialty, and adaptive camps where they explored the outdoors, built self-esteem, and made lasting friendships and memories.**

**40% of camp families received financial assistance.**

**“The Y is a safe haven for my granddaughter and has been phenomenal for her growth and development! ”**  
— Cindy, grandmother of Erika



# FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## Club Y program for middle school students

In 2012, our city experienced the tragedy of losing a teenager in a stabbing by the mall. It was a wake up call for our community.

The Meriden YMCA stepped up and expanded our offerings to provide a safe supervised place for students to be with their friends and develop their potential. We offered this for FREE for the rest of the 2012-2013 school year and for only \$2 per person this school year.

**170 middle school students had a safe, fun place to spend time with friends at Club Y on Friday nights at no or low cost to them.**

Celebrating Dodgeball Win



Volunteers are the key to the success of the Meriden YMCA. Over forty individuals participate in our board and committee process and another 215 volunteer in a program service capacity. Numerous volunteers serve and deliver Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners every year and we also have many volunteer coaches.

**More than 1,000 holiday meals were served and delivered.**

Chris Sievert (center) and friends serve holiday meals every year.





# FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

When we work together, we move our community forward.



"I grew up poor. I put myself through college.

Sports and athletics were a big part of my life growing up. Not only did I get to stay in shape but I had coaches and people who guided me and to look up to. I wasn't always an angel in school. I had teachers who looked out for me and some people cut me a break.

Sports help keep you out of trouble, learn healthy lifestyles, and good character values that carry over into business like honesty and doing the right thing. Sports and coaches help kids become productive members of society.

My life could have turned out a whole lot different. I got involved with the Y and stay involved because it's an opportunity to give back and reach as many kids as I can to help them like coaches, sports, and teachers helped me.

I see children who have grown up at the Y becoming instructors, trainers, camp counselors, directors and more. Now they are giving back to the next generation. Everyone you help turns around and helps someone else.

I feel like a member of the family at the Meriden YMCA. It is a great organization and the community needs to know about what we do."

— Don Rittman, Meriden YMCA Board of Directors, Treasurer, Past President, long time member, volunteer and donor.

**Every day, we work side by side with our neighbors in our community to make sure everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. No one is turned away due to an inability to pay.**



# 2013-2014 Meriden YMCA Head Start Program Annual Report

## Funding

Federal: \$1,1084,350, State: \$169,567, School Readiness: \$255,024. The federal approved budget:

- Personnel - \$693,341 which consists of salaries for program managers, content specialists, teachers, teacher's aides, nutrition services, substitutes, clerical and fiscal staff.
- Contractual - \$22,728 which consist of contracts services, computer financial support software to assist with budgets, monthly statements
- Fringe benefits - \$212,446 which consists of taxes for social security, federal, state, workman's comp, health, dental, life insurance
- Other costs - \$132,664 which consist of utilities, insurance, general building maintenance repairs, local travel, staff training, child services consultants, parent services, accounting legal services, publications/ advertising and other minor expenses like the audit, payroll services, employee hiring, and administrative support.
- Supplies - \$19,171 which consists of office supplies, child and family service supplies, food service, disability supplies, assessments, paper products

## Enrollment

We are funded for 144 children and were fully enrolled on the first day of school. The program served 165 children over the course of the year. The average monthly funded enrollment was 83.05% with actual monthly enrollment at 84.02%. There were 98% income eligible and 2% over income families.



Frameworks, Head Start performance standards, State Standards, end of year Pre-K expectations, Kindergarten Readiness profiles, observations and parent input. There were 14 specific identified school readiness goals. They focused on social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language and literacy, physical development health, cognitive and general/knowledge. These are assessed and reviewed three times a year to ensure we are on target. Teachers also plan kindergarten school readiness skills that are aligned to the Connecticut State Frameworks such as writing their name, patterning and some children begin learning sight words.

The latest federal review was conducted in May 2012. There were no findings from the review and we are in compliance of all regulations.

There were 100% of enrolled children that received medical exams and 100% received dental exams.

This year we worked with the Meriden Board of Education where kindergarten teachers came to our program to see what is happening in a preschool classroom and some of our teachers had the opportunity to visit a kindergarten classroom to see what they are like.

## Parent Workshops

Parents were actively involved and received training/workshops on: pedestrian safety; nutrition workshops; money matters including budgeting & homebuyer's workshop; fatherhood events; early childhood; family literacy workshops; health insurance education; energy assistance; kindergarten transition and the breakfast with the principal's event.



After these two visits we were able to get together to discuss the visits as well as what skills kindergarten teachers are looking for from the children as they enter kindergarten. We hosted a breakfast with the principals for parents to meet the principal of the school where their child will be attending in the fall and to learn about the new Central Registration system that the Board of Education began this year.

## Preparing Children for Kindergarten:

One of the program goals is to prepare children for kindergarten. Our program develops school readiness goals based on the Head Start





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