

# MORE HEALTH MORE HOPE MORE OPPORTUNITY

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear friends,

I am writing to invite you to be part of something more in our community. When you join, donate or volunteer you are part of an organization that offers more health, more hope, more opportunity.



**John Benigni, CEO**

- More than 1,000 children learned to be safe and confident in the water last year. In our swim lessons, we not only teach kids to swim, we also build confidence.
- We nurture the development of 839 children in our programs for infants through school age children. The Y is more than a child care provider. We prepare your children for life.
- Biggest Winner Challenge participants lost over 1600 pounds to date and 125 children and families broke the cycle of childhood obesity through our free PACE program. The Y is more than a place to work out. We transform the health of our community.
- Our Friday Night Club Y program serves 150 middle school students each week. The Y is more than a place to hang out. We provide a safe place for kids to be themselves.
- Last year over 1900 children attended our summer camp and 43% of our campers received financial assistance. Mountain Mist Day Camp is more than fun in the sun. We help kids discover who they want to be, and develop life skills – responsibility, self-reliance and how to work together with people from different backgrounds.
- Last year we expanded our Enrichment Academy adding Math Rocks to our Reading Rocks tutoring program to help students reach new levels of success in school. We also served over 30 children in our clinical after school program for children with special needs. The Y is more than sports or swimming, we help children grow and thrive.
- The Y is where parents have time to care for themselves and kids make lifelong friendships playing together in Child Watch. This is now a free service for those with family memberships.
- The Y is so much more than a gym. It is a place where our community's families gather for family time at our free monthly events such as Bounce Into the New Year, Dr. Seuss Night, Healthy Kids Day, and Family Fun Day at Mountain Mist.

Together we can do so much more. Please act today and:

1. Give – Make a pledge and mail it or donate online at [www.meridenymca.org](http://www.meridenymca.org).
2. Join – Find out how we can help your employees improve their health and well-being to reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and lower insurance costs. Call Joan or Carrie to learn more at 203-235-6386 today.

3. Volunteer – Be a coach, a mentor, share a skill or talent, or help at an event.

Join me to make a better Meriden.

Thank you for your support,  
John Benigni, CEO



Meriden YMCA  
serves  
**19,000**  
out of  
population  
of 60,638

In 2014 the  
Meriden YMCA  
employed  
**483**  
employees.

#### 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.

**The Y. So Much More™**  
meridenymca.org | (203) 235-6386



# MORE OPPORTUNITY

Richard and Tonya and their children, twins Ethan and Ashlynn Frazier-Wilson

Our children started at the Meriden YMCA Little Rascals program then went to the Crown Street program (Meriden YMCA Martin Gaffey Child Care Center with Child Care Director Mary-Jo DiPasquale.) They start kindergarten next year. It will be so hard to leave.

## Ethan

When I first talked to Mary-Jo about Ethan and his issues she was not sure how to deal with them but was willing to work together. Ethan did not have hearing, did not talk, or walk.

Ethan started in Ms. Callie's class and they were really helpful because he could be really stubborn at times. Ethan has Mr. Andy and Ms. Kendra. I wish Mr. Andy could travel through school with Ethan as his paraprofessional because they have such a good connection and he can calm Ethan down.

Everyone has been wonderful and is excited at his progress. The staff is like family and friends to us.

## Ashlynn

When Ashlynn and Ethan started in 2013 Ashlynn was not talking. She did a PPT at Roger Sherman and they recommended we put her amongst other kids her age. Now I can't get her to stop talking or sit down for five minutes after school!

Ashlynn's teachers are Miss Kitty, Miss Nece, and Miss Sam. She is so excited to go to school every day. She can't wait to "go to Miss Kitty's house!"

Ashlynn likes working on numbers and circles with Miss Kitty. "I like building blocks, making stuff in art, circles and shapes, reading books, singing with Miss Kitty." They played instruments they made, and are making bumble bees and butterflies.

**"The Y is more than child care. They are amazing. It is a good family place."**

Ethan is in EIP and is bussed to Roger Sherman. At Crown Street they get him on and off the bus and back safely. They let services come in which is wonderful so I don't have to drive him all over town for appointments. He gets everything right there.

Mary-Jo always has an open door. She always tries to help everybody. I try to keep everyone informed on what is going on with the kids. She is very helpful at getting everyone to work together. She comes to tears when we talk about Ethan.

Ashlynn did dance (ballet and tap,) gymnastics and both have done swimming. I would like to get her back to gymnastics. She has a lot of energy after school!

What does the Y mean to your family?

Richard: The Y is more than child care. We are going through problems financially and they have helped us. They are amazing.

Tonya: I work part time and my husband had a stroke last year. It was hard to talk about it at first. Mary-Jo said her door was always open if I wanted to talk. They helped us out at

Christmas time too.

The Crown Street staff is working with Ashlynn and Ethan, getting them ready for kindergarten and keeping them healthy with the food they provide them. I can't get these kids to eat and Miss Sue gets them to eat everything! She provides "hefty" meals with all of the fruit, vegetables and everything.

What would you say to a family that is looking at the Y?

Richard: Go. They are good people. If I do make it I will give back to the Y (Tonya joked and says maybe they will win the lotto). They have helped us out a whole lot.

Tonya: Go. If you go and interview with Mary-Jo if you have a child with challenges be up front be honest so she can work with staff to help the child. It has been a good experience.

Richard: Really good place. Any problem you have can be worked out. Good family place.

Tonya added: Not only the classroom but for family events too. Ethan loved bounce house day. Ethan dove right in!

I was uncomfortable at first at starting at Crown Street. I was afraid it was not going to work and afraid for him to be a burden. He just learned

to walk at age two and a half. When he started he could not speak and could not do the stairs. I was told to send him to the school for the deaf then it was recommended we try here first. Now I am really so glad I gave him that experience and did not shelter him.





# MORE HEALTH

## Donna Scott

I joined the Y because it has a pool, it has everything. I have tried every gym. My husband was a body builder back in the day so we have been everywhere.

I started out in the pool doing aqua aerobics classes then Annie encouraged me to try other classes too.

I tried Zumba, Piloxing, Pilates and then I found CrossFit. I love it. Sometimes you feel like you are going to die when you do it, then you can't wait to go back for more. I can't wait to go to class. A year ago I competed in a CrossFit competition in Florida and won my division. Doing CrossFit here got me ready.

I injured my leg ski racing in February. Meriden YMCA members and staff reached out to me and checked in with me to give their support. As soon as I was ready to come back every instructor has worked with me, looked out for me and modified things for me. My goal is to start running again in July.

I like that the Y is so involved in the community. I thought of my own community project to give back by getting a group of us together and working on the garden near CrossFit.

I've lost 50 pounds and I've met so many awesome friends of all ages. We are a tight group of friends and do everything together. If the Y was not here I think I would cry. I can't wait until summer vacation after school gets out and I can spend more time at the Y.



**“I've lost 50 pounds and I've met so many awesome friends of all ages. I can't wait until summer vacation after school gets out and I can spend more time at the Y.”**

## **Bridget Marquis**

I love the Y - it has changed my whole life. If I don't go to the Y I feel like a piece of me is missing.

I went many years ago, dropped out then signed up again 4 to 5 years ago. At that time I weighed 262 pounds. Today I weigh 175 pounds so it has changed my life.

I never ran before. I was heavy and I smoked. (Meriden YMCA Fitness Staff member) Beky Hanna got me into running. She really inspires me to run and is the best running coach. We are doing 5Ks every month. I am more of a jogger and she sticks by me. I also love her spinning classes. She motivates me. All of Annie's classes are wonderful too. There are a lot of great people at the Y including the staff.

**"I love the Y—it has changed my whole life. If I don't go to the Y I feel like a piece of me is missing."**

My favorite workout is doing cardio, getting a good sweat. My favorite cardio workouts are kickboxing, treadmill body and spinning.

I chose the Y instead of other gyms in town because the

Y is different. No one judges you here. You don't have to have the perfect body to walk in the door. I don't need the whole world seeing me. I am more comfortable here.

We do races and challenges with a group of members and instructors. I started off with a Warrior Dash. In June we are doing a Down and Dirty Race. My next goal is to get a bike and do a race.

I tell a lot of people go to the Y. My grandfather Raymond (who is 84) goes there and my uncle too.

The Y to me is a second home, I love being there.





# MORE CONFIDENCE

## Carmen Perreault

My experience at the Y has been great. My weight gain started when I was 14 and I went up to 263 pounds. The person inside me wanted to be active and do things. I played softball until age 41. It was not easy with that weight on me.

In 2005 I was told I had cancer. They got it out. It made me realize how short life is and I had to do something. I started, then stopped, then got serious again 5 years ago.

The people are excellent at the Y especially the trainers. They push you when I feel I don't want to do it no more. My favorite workout is cardio, Beky's spinning and everything Annie does is awesome. They bring the cardio and the fun into it! It is not boring. You say let's do this! When they come out with something new we try it. I gotta push myself and find out how far I can go.

I chose the Y because I felt more comfortable here. I was not judged. Everybody helped each other. It is like a second home for me.

What does the Y mean to the community? They do a lot. I helped serve dinner with my daughter and I saw the people I worked with at the gym doing it too. I was driving and bringing food to different places with my son. This is what it is all about. You got to give.

What are your goals now? I am comfortable with my weight, now I need to tone. It is hard but I am gonna work on it. Also, each month a group of us do an event. I have done two Warrior Dashes (first one with my husband and son), a 5K with my daughter, and other races. Beky is awesome. She trained my daughter for her first 5K. I am very proud of her.

My husband lost 50 pounds. He has never been in gym his whole life. He would not get off the elevator at first then he saw me losing the weight. Now it is like a religion and he has to go 3 times a week. He feels out of whack if does not go.

I tell everybody at the gym especially someone who is considered "a big girl" you can do it! I show them my picture and say this was me. When I started I could not touch the floor. The first time I was able to do it I thought "oh my god I just touched the floor!!!" Pay it forward.

Go to the Y. No one cares what you look like and it is like a family. It is like going to family's house but more fun!





## The Bruce Family

### Trey, Edith, Ivan and Bodhi

Trey: We moved to Meriden when Ivan was 18 months old. We started at the Meriden YMCA with swimming then sports like t-ball, soccer, and basketball.

When Ivan was six years old, Bodhi was one year old and started in the South Meriden Infant and Toddler program when Edith went back to work.

Now Bodhi does everything too. The boys have done sports, clay class, theater, Spanish, and Bodhi's favorite, cooking class.

Bodhi: 'I love cooking! And my favorite part of the Y is eating at Miss Sue's cooking class. My favorite thing to make is worms and dirt. Mom loves her clam chowder.' Edith: Miss Sue is awesome.

Ivan's favorite part of the Y is 'the people. They help you with whatever you are doing in a positive way. They are a good influence.'

Trey: The boys have also done the before and after school program at Israel Putnam and Ivan comes to the Y after middle school for the Y Upgrade program to do homework and work out. In the summer they have a blast at Mountain Mist Day Camp.

Trey and Edith: The Y is the cornerstone of our community. We are fully integrated into the Y and it is integrated into our lives. We are never leaving Meriden. It is part of our family.

What is taught at the Y is an extension of the values we try to instill in our children at home. These values are taught by people who do community service every day working with and for others.

Ivan wired like that but it is great to have these values carried over from our home. The Y is more than just a safe place to be when we are not with him. It is priceless.

Ivan: I started volunteering at age 6. My mom heard about a save the sound event where you go do some clean up and then get concert tickets as a reward. I kept going from there. It carried on with the Meriden YMCA Thanksgiving dinner and some Christmas ones.

Trey: Ivan and Edith look forward to serving Thanksgiving meals at the Y. Bodhi and I stay home and cook the family meal together.

**What is taught at the Y is an extension of the values we try to instill in our children at home and they are taught by people who do community service every day working with and for others.**



# MORE OPPORTUNITY

**2014 – 2015**

## **MERIDEN YMCA HEAD START PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT**

### **Funding**

Federal: \$1,157,172, State: \$175,311, School Readiness: \$255,024. The federal approved budget:

- Personnel - \$753,430 which consists of salaries for program managers, content specialists, teachers, teacher's aides, and nutrition services, substitutes, clerical and fiscal staff.
- Fringe benefits - \$227,860 which consists of taxes for social security, federal, state, workman's comp, health, dental, life insurance
- Supplies - \$535 which consists of office supplies, child and family service supplies, food service, disability supplies, assessments, paper products
- Contractual - \$8,327 which consist of contracts services, computer financial support software to assist with budgets, monthly statements
- Other costs - \$143,635 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.





## Enrollment

We are funded for 161 children and fully enrolled on first day of school. The program served 189 children over the course of the year. The average monthly funded enrollment was 81.7% with actual monthly enrollment at 83.1%. There were 100% income eligible families and 7 of those were children were eligible due to being in foster care.

The latest federal review was conducted in May 2012. There were no findings from the review and we are in compliance of all regulations. The education CLASS review was conducted in October 2015. Our score for emotional support was 6.6250, classroom organization was 6.0926 and instructional support was 2.8333. We scored above the national average for each level and no further follow up is needed.



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

## Parent Workshops

Parents were actively involved and received training/workshops on: Pedestrian Safety; Nutrition workshops; money matters including budgeting & saving workshop; fatherhood events; early childhood; child development; health education; family literacy promotion; kindergarten transition and the breakfast with the principal's event.

Preparing Children for Kindergarten: One of our program goals is to prepare children for kindergarten. Our program develops school readiness goals



based on the Head Start 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 CT Early Learning and Development Standards, such as writing their name, patterning and some children begin learning sight words. Again 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 teacher's had the opportunity to visit a Kindergarten classroom to see what they are like and to ask teacher's questions about Kindergarten and their curriculum. 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 learn about the importance of registering your child prior to school beginning.

## Office of Head Start

On April 2, 2015, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell announced that Dr. Blanca Enriquez has been appointed to lead the Office of Head Start.



# MORE SUPPORT



## Patricia Marcinczyk

The Meriden YMCA is my lifeline in more ways than one.

I was a care giver for many years for my husband while working. It became too much and I retired from teaching and became his full time caregiver.

I started at the Y using the pool for exercise due to knee issues, and ended up making a wonderful group of friends called the "pool pals" who got me through a lot of stuff. The members and staff became a terrific support network.

My husband had big medical issues. The staff was very supportive. It would have been very easy to have treated him just as a number, but they did not. One day my husband had a health incident. John (Benigni, CEO) brought my husband home and someone followed in the truck.

My husband passed away 2 years ago. The Y staff all came to the wake.

The staff treats you like family. Always a kind word, a smile, helpful. We started a Mah Jong group and they helped us find a space and they set up tables and chairs for us every week.

My pool pals group supported me, saved me, told me it is okay to go on and how to laugh again.

We started with water aerobics and have expanded to Zumba Gold, strength training for

seniors, lunch and learn, field trips, and other antics such as being the "aquatics a capella group" at a Castle Craig production. In the Fall a group of us are going on vacation together.

We have a good laugh when we go to the Meriden YMCA always come out feeling better. It is a real eye opener for a lot of people and I got a lot of people to join. The Y saved me.

**"The staff treats you like family. Always a kind word, a smile, helpful."**

## MERIDEN YMCA

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## MERIDEN YMCA HEAD START

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