



# TRANSFORMING LIVES

2024, ISSUE 1

## LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends and Supporters,



In 2023, we celebrated a historic milestone—the 150th anniversary of Greater Somerset County YMCA—an extraordinary journey marked by resilience, growth, and profound community impact.

This milestone is not just about the passage of time; it is a testament to the enduring commitment and support of individuals like you who have played an integral role in the success of our organization. Together, we have weathered challenges, celebrated triumphs, and, most importantly, worked hand in hand to create positive change that strengthens our community – always evolving, always innovating, and always striving for a better tomorrow.

Each day, with a steadfast commitment to equity, we work intentionally and purposefully to ensure that everyone has the resources, relationships, and opportunities that lead to a healthy, connected life. This fuels Greater Somerset County YMCA's mission and uniquely positions the Y to enrich individual lives while bringing people together. The Y is where community thrives; we are here for good.

In this issue of Transforming Lives, I hope you will be inspired by all of the 'good' made possible through your investment in the Y and the community.

On behalf of everyone who benefits from your generosity, thank you.

*David M. Carcieri*

David M. Carcieri  
President/CEO



## MISSION IMPACT

### Annual Meeting and Campaign Kick-off

You champion community!

On February 7, we held Greater Somerset County YMCA's Annual Meeting and Annual Campaign Kick-off. Nearly 200 guests attended the event at the Bridgewater Manor to celebrate the Y's 2023 accomplishments and launch the 2024 fundraising campaign.

During the event, Annual Campaign Chair Lisa, LaVecchia, announced a healthy start to the campaign with \$719,714 raised, representing 49% of the 2024 goal of \$1,480,000. Early momentum was driven by pledges from 100% of members of the Board of Directors and Branch Boards. Additionally, Y staff pledged donations of \$96,989, with 89 who commit through the Hourly Club in which they donate the equivalent of one hour of their wages per pay period – a testimony of the staff's devotion to the Y's cause.

Philanthropic support is essential to sustain Greater Somerset County YMCA as a nonprofit, community-benefit organization committed to addressing social inequity, health disparities, learning gaps and more. One hundred percent of the funds raised through the Annual Campaign goes directly to community. Every day, we work to ensure that everyone has the opportunities, relationships, and resources necessary to reach their full potential.

In 2023, we provided over \$1.9 million in direct financial assistance and community program support to meet urgent community needs.

Board of Directors Chair, Greg M. Romano, addressed the guests and shared his thoughts on the Y's community impact. "Greater Somerset County YMCA has a 150-year history of keeping our community strong," he said. "The Y helps to connect us; it provides a safe, welcoming place for all; it helps us to be healthier; it inspires our children; it opens the door to opportunity; it helps everyone to thrive. The Y is essential to the foundation of our community."

As a donor, you inspire us through your commitment to community. We are truly grateful for your generous support. You make the Y's mission possible.



# FOREVER IN SERVICE

## 2023 Mission Impact

Throughout our 150 year history, Greater Somerset County YMCA has been addressing pressing social issues that affect our children, families, health and neighbors, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable citizens and under-served populations. Through our mission, we strengthen community by making accessible the vital support, opportunities, and resources that empower everyone to thrive.

With the support of our donors, volunteers, members, partners and staff, we accomplished wonderful achievements and meaningful impact in 2023. We are pleased to share a few of the many highlights with you:

### 2023 SNAPSHOT

#### 150 Years of Impact

In 2023, we celebrated Greater Somerset County YMCA's 150th anniversary. Our robust history began with the YMCA of Somerville which expanded to Somerset County YMCA in 1914 to serve more communities. In 1948, Somerset County YMCA split into Somerset Hills YMCA and Somerset Valley YMCA. During 67 years of operating separately, both organizations continued to grow. Somerset Valley YMCA constructed Somerville YMCA, purchased the Bridgewater Pool that became Bridgewater YMCA, and constructed Hillsborough YMCA; while Somerset Hills YMCA built a facility in Basking Ridge and completed several expansion projects throughout the years. In 2015, the two Y organizations reunited as Somerset County YMCA following a unanimous vote by both Boards of Directors. Somerset County YMCA was awarded the Plainfield service area in 2019, launched programs in Franklin Township in 2020, and, in 2022, Princeton YMCA merged into the organization. The expanded service area precipitated a name change to Greater Somerset County YMCA to reflect all of Somerset County and parts of the surrounding counties.

It is in thanks to our community champions, like you, that we can expand the capacity of Greater Somerset County YMCA to do more and serve more. With your support, we will continue to deepen community impact as we chart the next chapter in our journey of service and growth.



## Timeless Tribute

As part of our sesquicentennial celebration, we proudly honored several devoted volunteers as new inductees to the Founders Circle. Inductees were honored with an unveiling of their names on the Founders' Tree at Somerset Hills YMCA. The Founders Circle was established in 1991 to honor longtime volunteers who, through their talents, passion, service, and contributions, have not only enhanced the sustainability of Greater Somerset County YMCA but also strengthened the community. Honorees include: The Bateman Family, Susan Doherty, Lois and Neil Gagnon, James Gibson, The Hockenbury Family, Patricia Hurley, Mark Irwin, Lauren Luik, The McLachlan Family, John McManus, Peter Olsen, Michael Osterman, The Perantoni Family, Leslie Quick III, Robert Raymar, The Raynes Family, Harry Smith, The Stires Family, Sylvester Sullivan (posthumous recognition), Andrea Thorne, and Tad Waldbauer.



## Camp Dragonfly

In the summer of 2023, we launched a new camp program called Camp Dragonfly. The two-week camp was designed for children, age 5 through 13, dealing with grief, trauma, or loss to provide them with a safe, welcoming, and caring environment to help them heal and grow. Our skilled staff, who were trained in trauma informed care, guided the children through each camp day full of fun activities and new friendships. All of the children enrolled had experienced a trauma such as the loss of a loved one, social isolation, and homelessness, to name a few. The camp was offered at no cost to the participants to further alleviate the stress on their families.

**18** children enrolled  
**100%** participated at no cost



## Summer of Discovery

Summer camp at the Y is a season of discovery and personal growth for kids. There is an abundance of opportunities for experiential learning that allow kids to broaden their horizons. Each day immerses our campers in activities that encourage them to unleash ingenuity, talents, and fun, all while making friends and lifelong memories. Our well-rounded approach enriches the whole child through social-emotional, academic, character, and physical development. Highlights from 2023 include the growth of our Camp SOAR program in Franklin Township, which more than doubled enrollment; a partnership with USA Triathlon to encourage campers to train for a "mini-tri"; and, expanded opportunities for children to improve their swim skills.

**2,200+** campers across all branches  
**1 in 5** campers received Financial Assistance  
**25** campers trained, competed & completed a Mini-triathlon  
**84%** of campers improved swim skills by 1-2 levels



## Mentorship Programs

Mentors play a pivotal role in the personal and academic development of middle and high school students, offering invaluable guidance, support, and real-world insights during a critical period of growth. Over the past year, we have proudly served more students through programs that inspire bright futures. Enrollment grew significantly in our ACE (Accept, Compete, Excel) program, which is designed to reduce chronic absenteeism among students in grades 6-12 who are most at risk of falling behind. In addition, we launched Achievers, which is a career and college readiness program, also offered at no cost, to empower high school students to pursue their personal, academic, and professional goals. Program components include weekly meetings, college/career planning, internship guidance, and college tours. Through these programs we aim to be positive role models that demonstrate the importance of goal setting, hard work, resilience, and ethical decision-making.

**41** students in ACE  
**27** students in Achievers





## Water Safety

Swimming is a life skill that makes communities safer by preventing accidental drownings. We encourage children and adults, alike, to learn to be safe around water and develop strong swim skills. In addition to the Y’s swim lessons, our no-cost Safety Around Water teaches essential knowledge and skills to help individuals of all ages to improve confidence and water safety. In the fall of 2023, we collaborated with Franklin Township’s Board of Education to launch a pilot program that integrates our Safety Around Water lessons into the physical education curriculum for 2nd graders; a model that we hope to expand to additional school districts.

**630** participants in Safety Around Water  
**5,078** children in Swim Lessons  
**127** adults in Swim Lessons



## Investing in Health

On January 31, we hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the newly renovated Hillsborough YMCA. The renovation project brings upgraded amenities to the facility including revitalized locker rooms, new universal/family locker rooms, an expanded Wellness Center with state-of-the-art equipment, three new classrooms for educational programs, and a modernized Welcome Center with social spaces. All of the renovations were designed through a lens of inclusivity and removing barriers for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities. We celebrated the ribbon cutting with over 60 attendees, including elected officials, dedicated branch board members, supportive community partners, and excited members and staff. The Hillsborough YMCA revitalization project is funded through a capital campaign. We are so grateful for the generous support of donors. To finish the remaining renovations, we continue to raise funds for this capital project as a meaningful, legacy opportunity rooted in the support of Hillsborough neighbors for generations to come.



## Meet Hunter

“At a young age, Hunter was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and osteoporosis. Physical activity comes with inherent risk; even routine activities increase his chances of breaking a bone. So, Hunter has lived much of his young life sheltered at home and, usually, not enjoying the same experiences as other 9 year-olds. But, the past two summers were different. Hunter came to Y Camp, where children are encouraged to accept each other’s differences. The counselors patiently helped Hunter throughout each day and inspired him to try new things and make new friends. Hunter has a very hard road ahead of him and, so, my wish for him is to enjoy being a kid for as long as possible. Y Camp allowed my grandson to be a kid and enjoy summer, despite all of his medical challenges – the best gift ever. All children deserve that opportunity.” – Margret

# SHOW YOUR SPIRIT

## 2024 Spirit Awards & Annual Campaign Celebration

Join Greater Somerset County YMCA for our 2024 Spirit Awards and Annual Campaign Celebration!

The celebration will be held on April 10, 2024 at 6:30 p.m at Raritan Valley Country Club. We’ll be honoring the hard work of our volunteers and partners, and celebrating this year’s Annual Campaign. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Sylvia Velez at [svelez@gscymca.org](mailto:svelez@gscymca.org)

We can’t wait to see you!



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Greater Somerset County YMCA is a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose and each other. The Y empowers everyone – no matter who they are or where they’re from – by ensuring access to resources, relationships and opportunities for all to learn, grow and thrive. For information about Greater Somerset County YMCA and financial assistance, visit us at [www.gscymca.org](http://www.gscymca.org).