

1960-2020 MEMOIRS  
YMCA OF GREATER ERIE

160 YEARS

WE'RE HERE  
FOR GOOD



# FORWARD

When I took on the assignment of digging into the history of the YMCA of Greater Erie, I wasn't sure just what I would unearth among the archives at the Hagen History Center and the documents from the Downtown YMCA.

Early in 2020, before the pandemic upended our lives, the YMCA of Greater Erie commissioned me to research and write about the YMCA for its 160th anniversary. I had a comparative template to follow: A 50-page booklet, called "Minutes Read and Approved," sampling the first 100 years of the local Y's history.

My task involved looking into the Y's history from 1960 to the present, along with a timeline of the Y's history from its inception to the present day. I reviewed all available meeting minutes from the Y's Board of Directors and related organizations, along with newspaper clippings, YMCA scrapbooks, photographs, Y press releases and other documents, as noted in this book.

Heading into the assignment, I knew that the YMCA of Greater Erie had a significant history and important role in serving the community, whether teaching people how to swim, providing them with an outlet for exercise, feeding children in need or offering day care services for parents and their children.

But that just skims the surface. I didn't fully realize the vast scope of the Y's work until I read countless pages of documents – either at the Hagen History Center or at home – searching for important milestones and offbeat nuggets of history. You will see how the Y has made its mark on the community, and how it's changed with the times, through vignettes that are presented in chronological order – starting with a capital funds campaign for the Glenwood Park Y in 1959-60 and ending with how the Y adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

This book would not have been possible without the assistance of Pauline Stanton at the Hagen History Center's Library and Archives Department. She retrieved all the archival documents for me – lengthy meeting minutes books, scrapbooks, brochures, photos and other items from 30 boxes among the Y's Collection at the Hagen History Center – and emailed interesting photos to consider for this publication.

I also want to thank the YMCA's Tammy Roche for answering all my questions and providing me with boxes of important documents to review – especially helpful while the Hagen History Center was shut down due to the pandemic. Thanks also to Tammy and the rest of the Leadership Team for reviewing this book and suggesting other milestones to include in the final product.

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed researching and writing it!

– John Guerriero

*John Guerriero is a freelance writer and editor from Erie who worked as an award-winning reporter for the Erie Times-News for 35 years before retiring from the newspaper business in 2016. He wrote about politics, business, crime and courts, features, entertainment, and various other subjects, including the YMCA. He is writing his first novel and works on various freelance projects. He and his wife, Judy, have two adult sons. His interests include music, running, biking, skiing, travel, photography, reading, and, of course, writing. He's also been a longtime participant in the Highmark QUAD games. He can be reached at [johnguerrierowrites@gmail.com](mailto:johnguerrierowrites@gmail.com).*

***Check out his website, [johnngwrites.com](http://johnngwrites.com).***



### **The YMCA of Greater Erie County's Mission:**

*The YMCA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.*

### **Our Focus:**

*Youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.*

### **Our Cause:**

#### **Strengthening community.**

*It is the belief of the YMCA of Greater Erie that no one should ever be denied services because of inability to pay.*

### **YMCA VIGNETTES:**

#### **Erie YMCA Scrapbooks – 1959-1960**

The YMCA's capital funds campaign to secure \$1,278,000 in public funding for a new Y Branch (along with some improvements at the Downtown Y) was kind of a big deal. Another \$172,000 was available from the YMCA Endowment Fund. The project was so big that the contents of the fundraising campaign for the Glenwood Park Y, at 3727 Cherry St., are contained in two separate, 2-inch-thick scrapbooks that outline pledges, funding plans, newspaper articles and numerous other documents. In a news release, Edward C. Doll, president of the board of directors, said the YMCA had not asked the community for capital funds since 1930, "and it has reached a point where expansion of facilities is a must." The then-membership of 6,400 had been squeezed into a Downtown Y designed for 3,500 people, he said. "It's like conducting a 1959 business with 1932 space requirements," Doll said. The new building was designed with families in mind. (Times have changed; a pamphlet on the campaign states that the Downtown Y primarily works with young men.) Campaign bulletins showed mounting excitement as the Y neared its pledged goal. "We're coming into the home stretch. Victory is now in

sight," a campaign bulletin from Feb. 10, 1960 exclaimed. At that point, more than \$1 million had been pledged on the way to a successful Y fundraising campaign.

#### **Statewide convention pamphlet work book – 1960**

Long before Erie started to actively market itself as a convention destination, the YMCA was a little ahead of its time. In 1960, the city and the Y hosted a statewide convention honoring the then-100th anniversary of the Erie YMCA. The convention, on May 6-7, was held at the former Hotel Lawrence, at the northwest corner of 10th and Peach Streets, just steps away from the Downtown YMCA.

The statewide convention's formal business included budget approvals and a roundtable on professional recruiting and training, including the topic: "How can we be more effective in our recruiting at colleges and universities?" The conventioners approved expense budgets (for supervisory, program and district services) totaling \$320,235 – that matched the income budget of \$320,235 – funding contributed by individuals, firms and foundations. The state budget reflected an increase from \$307,060 in 1959.

But the convention wasn't all business. Attendees enjoyed a tour of Presque Isle State Park and the Lake Erie waterfront and enjoyed fellowship at the former Beachcomber Hotel, located on the lake near the park's entrance.

By today's prices, the convention was a bargain. The registration fee was \$2 for a full session; \$1.25 for a partial session. Conventioners could snag a single bed for \$9 at the Downtowner Hotel or a double bed for \$14; a single bed for \$6.25 at the Hotel Lawrence or \$8.80 with a bath, or a double bed for \$9.50 or \$12.50 with a bath. But the real bargain was at the Y itself, where men could get a bed for \$2. Parking cost \$1 per day at a private lot at 10th and Sassafras streets, or 50 cents for 12 hours.

#### **General Electric Erie Plant newspaper – Jan. 22, 1960**

The lead story on the front page of this eight-page edition of the GE newspaper announced: "Erie Plant Employees' Support of Y Drive Gains

Momentum.” GE employees’ participation in the Building Fund Campaign of the Greater Erie YMCA is expected to be a big factor in reaching the Y’s goal of \$1,278,000 for the Glenwood Park YMCA, the paper reported. GE matched employees’ contributions, dollar for dollar, up to \$75,000, according to the article.

### **Photo of then-Sen. John F. Kennedy – Sept. 28, 1960**

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what’s the price of a picture featuring thousands of supporters? John F. Kennedy, just months before winning the presidency, electrified Erie when he spoke to thousands of people in downtown Erie. An image of that historic day, found in the Y’s archives, shows Kennedy at the lectern, with fans spelling out his surname in separate K, E, N, N, E, D, Y letters. The Downtown YMCA building, across the street, is prominent in the frame. The Y couldn’t have bought that kind of advertising.

### **Pennsylvania Department of Health Certificate for Public Bathing Space – 1961**

Making a splash! The state Department of Health granted a permit on March 6, 1961, for construction and operation of an outdoor swimming pool at Camp Sherwin in Girard. Opened in 1903 as the Erie Y’s first camp for boys, Camp Sherwin is located on the shores of Lake Erie, 13 miles west of Erie. The 50-acre, rustic site consists of woodlands, an inland lake, canoes, sailboats, hiking trails, sports fields, sleeping cabins, the swimming pool – of course – and much more.

### **YMCA documents – July 15, 1962**

E. Maxton Darone, general secretary of the Erie YMCA, acknowledged Lloyd E. Cramer, secretary of the Y’s Suburban Division, for providing the voice over the past four and one-half years for the daily dial-a-message, which features “a moment of inspiring thought, a breath of the uplifting and spiritual.” Cramer was not only the voice, but the researcher, collector, selector and editor of those daily messages. He retreated 800 times in the late evening to the penthouse atop the Y to record messages he had chosen for the day. Many people asked for written copies of the recorded phone messages, and he painstakingly typed and mailed them to those who asked. That prompted the printing of a partial collection of the “dial inspiration” program, a small booklet that could serve as a

“retreat to meditation for all who pause to read it,” Darone wrote.

### **Minutes, Glenwood Park YMCA Committee of Management meeting – Jan. 9, 1964**

A. Edward Duffin reported on some of the projected activities for the Adult Department. The extensive, eclectic list included bridge, golf, knitting, square dancing, hat making, millinery, slip covering, rifle shooting and table tennis. Meanwhile, there was discussion about the possibility of some activity for the “bachelor girls” and “bachelor men.” The topic led to a lot of discussion, “although the types of program, approach and promotion were indefinite.” Alas, the matter was tabled for future discussion.

### **Minutes, Glenwood Park YMCA Committee of Management meeting – Feb. 13, 1964**

It was suggested that some women who had not yet taken advantage of their membership privileges might be made more acquainted with the operation by enjoying “a morning tea, after which they could see what the program is in the gymnasium and in the pool.”

### **Minutes, Glenwood Park General Activity Committee meeting – May 13, 1965**

Phil Laird reported on a successful in-house circus, and the expansion from two to three days seemed to be worthwhile with attendance topping 650 people. Also, the Y entered a float in the Zoo Parade for the first time, and it was well received.

### **Minutes, Glenwood Park YMCA Board of Management meeting – Feb. 16, 1966**

General Secretary E. Max Darone reported on the status of a second pool for the Glenwood Y. The Board of Directors has given approval for the project. The project’s tentative completion date is early 1967. The existing pool will remain operational during construction of the new pool. At the Oct. 13, 1966, Activities Committee meeting, members heard that the pool cost about \$190,000, including architectural fees. The pool will be 30 feet by 60 feet, with a depth from 2.5 feet to 5 feet. Activities Committee members said they wanted to help raise funds for the pool costs. Ideas included holding a carnival, selling gallons of water

for the pool and selling bricks for the pool.

### **Minutes, Glenwood Park YMCA Board of Management meeting – Feb. 13, 1969**

This item in the meeting minutes was short and, and you could say, sweet: "February is the date set for the husband and wife dance." We can only assume it was scheduled on or around Valentine's Day.

### **Erie Daily Times – Sept. 5, 1969**

Columnist Ed Wellejus wrote a column about a new book from E. Max Darone, retired general secretary of the Y. In the book, Darone notes that famed composer, arranger and baritone singer Harry T. Burleigh became a member of the Erie Y on Feb. 20, 1888, appearing frequently on its program. Burleigh composed about 250 songs and arranged many others, including "Deep River," Wellejus noted. Darone's book is called "Minutes Read and Approved, Footnotes on the History of the Young Men's Christian Association of Erie."

### **Erie Daily Times – Sept. 20, 1969**

Times have changed since this newspaper article was published – in a big way. The paper reported that the Glenwood Park YMCA offered classes in Charm and Social Graces for adult women and junior and senior high school girls. The following topics were covered in the sessions: Definition of charm, head carriage, eye beauty, rules for being attractive, photographic pointers, basic modeling stances, proper way to walk and posture, putting on and taking off a coat properly and many other beneficial hints. All this year in the year of Woodstock!

### **Minutes, Board of Directors meeting – Feb. 17, 1970**

The board heard that the Downtown Y had met many of its needs through inside and outside renovations, repairs and upgrades. It planned that summer to repair "the structural integrity of the building super structure" and repair the pool area at an additional cost of \$125,000. But the board heard that before it could go into a full modernization of the Downtown Y, it must get answers from staff and lay committees about future needs in the youth department, dormitory, meeting and classrooms, and coffee shop. "Then, and only then, can the full extent of the financial need be ascertained of the total downtown renovation

project," the minutes state.

### **Minutes, Board of Directors meeting – Feb. 17, 1970**

It got heated. Chairman Charles Dailey reported that a potential masseur had been found, but that the man's salary requirements would be about \$8,000. "After a heated discussion of the necessity of an \$8,000 masseur, President Robert Haller recommended that the proposal for this masseur be passed on to the Personnel Committee for their deliberation." (Masseur services were discontinued two years later.)

### **Minutes, Board of Directors – March 16, 1971**

General Executive Director William Lander introduced Ed Smith, the Downtown YMCA Youth Physical Director and Aquatics Director. Smith is trying to provide a program that is enticing to boys, an example of which is the following Christmas program he organized this past year: Trips to the airport, including the navigation and control tower; progressive swimming; gymnastics tournaments; craft shops run by Mercyhurst College students; and hiking trips planned to the peninsula and other locales. Smith completed the annual candy sale, with 5,200 boxes sold. In the past, proceeds from the sale have purchased buses, pool tables and other program needs, as well as helping boys go to camp or buy a Y membership.

### **Minutes, Glenwood Park Board of Management meeting– Oct. 14, 1971**

A hot discussion ensued regarding the Y's image after a horse racing trip, sponsored by the Women's Physical Department. "It was suggested the board be informed on future trip destinations."

### **Minutes, Board of Directors meeting – Jan. 18, 1972**

Build it ... and they will come. It was moved by Mr. Robert Haller that the Erie YMCA commit itself to the priority of locating an east suburban recreation center. The board authorized the YMCA to buy a tract of land from the Harborcreek Township School District and adjacent front lots on Nagle Road "upon the best possible terms."



### **Minutes, Glenwood Park YMCA Board of Management meeting – Feb. 10, 1972**

The minutes reflect the “unhappy situation of one man dominating the volleyball league, and through abusive tactics causing many other men to quit.” The board heard that the man will be spoken to, and if necessary, his money will be returned and his membership confiscated. Or spiked, you might say!

### **Erie Daily Times – March 26, 1972**

When Dart Bookman retired in 1966 after 42 years with the New York Central Railroad, he wanted to do more than just “putter around the house.” His wife, Frances, gave him a Y membership as a Christmas present. He heard that swimming was the best exercise, so he started swimming at the Downtown Y pool. He could only swim three lengths when he started. By the end of 1966, he could swim 30 lengths without stopping. In 1967, he swam 51 miles, and doing more each subsequent year. He completed 115 miles in 1970 and 102 more miles in 1971 (he would have topped his previous year’s mileage but the pool was shut down for three months). Soon afterward, he received a pin from the Y in recognition of swimming 500 miles at the Y pool.

### **Minutes, Board of Directors meeting – May 15, 1973**

A “dress up” renovation of the Downtown YMCA’s main lobby was recommended by the House Committee at a cost not to exceed \$7,000. Renovations would include carpet replacement, furniture reupholstering and relocation of the lobby attendance desk. A new receptionist area is part of the plan. And more “dress up”: The lobby will be painted. The recommendation of the House Committee was accepted.

Here’s more than a “dress up”: The board heard that the present youth department will be converted to a multi-purpose program center designed for co-ed use for youth, adult and elderly programming; that a women’s and girls’ locker room will be incorporated into the space near the new pool and activity center; and that an L-shaped 25-meter pool will be developed and the existing pool area closed.

### **Minutes, Board of Directors meeting – Dec. 18, 1973**

Take a seat, racquetball players! The YMCA’s Physical Committee re-

ported spending “an extensive amount of time” discussing the use of handball courts for racquetball play. The committee concluded, though not unanimously, that under the present facility demands, the courts should be reserved for squash and handball.

### **Minutes, Board of Directors meeting – Oct. 16, 1973**

The board discussed, in broad terms, the possibility of potential expansion of the present association service area boundaries to include Edinboro and the New York and Ohio state lines. The state YMCA, which previously served those areas, is going out of business. Less than three months later, board minutes reflect that the Regional YMCA had asked the Erie association to consider the feasibility of extending its present service area to include this new territory where some YMCA programs exist.

### **Minutes, Board of Directors meeting – March 19, 1974**

Report to the board on recommendations for a \$3 million Capital Campaign:

The board heard about the need to build a full-service YMCA in East County. The success of the YMCA’s capital campaign with regard to eastside support depended on the installation of an eastside Y branch.

A committee unanimously recommended updating and improving the downtown facility, including the installation of three new handball courts, the renovation of the swimming pool, refurbishing of the business men’s locker room and the development of another health club. The committee believed the improvements would cost about \$730,000.

Renovations to the Glenwood YMCA branch are also part of the capital campaign. The key to the Glenwood program was reconstruction of the bottom floor, which would permit expansion of existing facilities. The price tag was put at \$130,000.

The Camp Committee sought a minimum allocation of \$200,000 to install an Olympic-sized pool, shower and locker facilities and a sewage treatment plant.

### **Minutes, Joint Meeting of the YMCA Board of Directors and**

### **Board of Trustees, Erie Yacht Club – June 4, 1974**

It was moved by Robert Haller, and seconded by Boyd Bert, that the firm of Jerold Panas & Partners, Inc. be hired to conduct the \$3 million capital campaign, contingent upon sufficient Neighborhood Assistance tax credits. Without enough tax credit monies, a new revised campaign goal will have to be negotiated between Panas Inc. and the Board.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Nov. 19, 1974**

Let's hear it for the coffee drinkers! William Lander reported that the Coffee Shop at the Downtown YMCA showed a surplus of \$350, which will be applied to the Coffee Shop's reserve account. Not to be outdone, the Downtown Y showed a surplus of \$435, over the anticipated surplus, and the Glenwood Y had a surplus of \$100 over the expected surplus. The Downtown Y's surplus was directed to a reserve account for dormitory improvements, and the Glenwood surplus was applied to the 1975 budget.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Nov. 19, 1974**

The West County YMCA is operating from the new Fairview High School and the new Girard High School. On the other side of the county, the North East Y successfully completed its membership campaign. More than 547 members joined, with 323 of them being new members. (That number increased to 733 one month later.) The membership campaign's success was attributed to the North East School District opening its facilities, at no cost, to the North East Y for programming. According to minutes from the Dec. 17, 1974 meeting, West County membership had increased to 572 members.

### **Minutes, Board of Directors – Dec. 20, 1974**

The YMCA received a windfall of \$45,000 due to a mislaid certificate for 91 shares of the South East Coal Company of Irvine, Kentucky. The windfall came from the estate of Helen Ross Taylor. Side note: The company was thought to be bankrupt, but "with the energy crisis, it is very much alive," the minutes state.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Jan. 20, 1976**

A report from the West County stated that programs now include belly dancing, golf, tennis and karate. The Girard High School is being used

entirely, while programs at Fairview High School have been canceled.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – March 16, 1976**

William Daisley introduced Janet Tempas, the Glenwood swimmer whose time in the breaststroke event was the best in the Y's state competition. Plans were discussed to send swimmers to the Women's National Swimming Championships in Fort Lauderdale this coming summer. Jim Johannes, an outstanding Y swimmer, told of plans to attend the Men's YMCA Nationals in Fort Lauderdale. Jim's father, Gil Johannes, stressed the great value of the competitive swim program.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – June 15, 1976**

Richard Levick, recording secretary, read a tribute in memory of the late E. Maxton Darone, prepared by Lloyd Cramer. A copy of the tribute will be given to Mrs. Darone. The tribute, in part, reads: "Max Darone lived a life triumphant as he served all with graciousness and humility. He has departed to be renewed in the 'House of Tomorrow' where all of us will one day meet in judgment. He was a pioneer in the fields of administration, boys' work, family programs and camping in the Young Men's Christian Association. His innovative programs were often copied but seldom equaled." It also was recommended that a portrait of Max be commissioned for the Downtown YMCA. (Professor Zolton Heya of Gannon College later painted the portrait, which was placed in the Downtown lobby.) ... In other business, directors agreed to the association and combination of the North East and Erie YMCA.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Oct. 19, 1976**

Good progress is being made on construction of the Eastside YMCA building. It's ahead of schedule, with 20 percent of the work completed. The gym floor is being poured, steel is being erected, walls are going up and crews are rough grading the parking lot. (The board minutes from Dec. 21, 1976, reflect that the anticipated completion date for the building is July or August 1977.)

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Sept. 20, 1977**

The Eastside Y Building is substantially complete, with about 900 charter members enrolled. The branch opened on a limited basis Sept. 6, with some final construction work still being done. ... The Youth Depart-

ment and Health Center at the Downtown YMCA are completed except for small details in the Health Center. All parts of the Youth Department are finished. The pool has been cleaned, patched and painted. Carpet and equipment have been ordered for the Pool Health Center areas. The handball court front walls are 75 percent completed.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Jan. 17, 1978**

The Eastside Y will hold its dedication ceremony on Jan. 22. An open house with tours of the building will follow. McDonald's restaurants are distributing guest passes. Membership has climbed to about 1,875.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Feb. 21, 1978**

Racquetball players get their day!

Thom Bennett reported that the conversation of the No. 6 handball court to racquetball has been very popular.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – March 21, 1978**

Here's a case of fitness bargain hunters shedding some weight and fattening their wallets: The Eastside Y gained 1,200 new memberships since the end of December 1977, bringing the total membership to 3,100 members. But since many of the new memberships were sold at discounted rates, more memberships will be sold to compensate for the discounts. (Memberships had increased to 5,069 by December 1979, and to 6,243 by November 1980.)

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Oct. 20, 1978**

The board heard that Mr. George Taylor, in his will, made the Y the beneficiary of 23 acres of what is known as White Swan property. The property, however, could not be sold until after December 1981. Bill Lander said he would like the proceeds of the eventual sale to be used for a new outdoor pool, which is "sorely needed" at Camp Sherwin. The new pool will be part of the future Taylor Family Outdoor Center. Questions arose as to the legal interpretation of the restriction on selling the 23 acres. The board sought verification from attorneys on selling the property as part of a larger 37-acre parcel before December 1981. But the board later learned the 23 acres could not be sold ahead of time. (The generous Mr. Taylor also left about \$800,000 to the YMCA, according to

Sept. 12, 1986 minutes.)

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Dec. 19, 1978**

Directors approved changing the Downtown Y facility to a co-ed facility at an approximate cost of \$7,000 with necessary renovations to be done by March 1, 1979.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Jan. 16, 1979**

Saturday Night Fever? The West County Y reported that soccer leagues are highly successful and disco dancing is the new craze.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – April 17, 1979**

Good to the last drop! Due to declining revenue, the coffee shop's last day of in-house operation will be April 27. (A month later, the board heard that the shop ended its operations with an accumulated loss of \$22,500.) However, the local Moser firm will be doing the vending, with vending machines to be placed in the front lobby. Plans call for planters and greenery around a small eating area, which can be enlarged later. Residents will be asked to keep the place "clean and neat and to keep others from loitering." It was also reported that the coffee shop, at one time, made a lot of money when it was housed in the basement of the building. (At its May 15 meeting, the board heard that the vending service is being well utilized.)

### **Erie Morning News – Jan. 14, 1980**

Women's Editor Betty Kubas noted that the Downtown Y, a landmark at West 10th and Peach Streets and "long a bastion of male dominance, went coed on Jan. 7, with the start of women's physical fitness classes. Kubas said the timing was right for women to join. She heard that January is the month when membership to the Erie Metro YMCA is available at a 10 percent savings. Kubas wrote that the Glenwood Park Family Y, which opened in 1962, and the Eastside Y, which opened in 1977, "struck an instant note of popularity and appeal with members of both sexes and all ages."

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Oct. 20, 1981**

Chairman Jeff Evans expressed the importance of determining whether to renovate the current Downtown Y building or relocate. Some re-



quired work include renovations to the dormitories; health center pool renovations; relocation or renovation of the women's locker room; and general refurbishing. Already, the board ruled against relocating the Y to a planned revitalization of the Boston Store building or to the former JC Penney building in the Erie Central Mall.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – March 16, 1982**

Busy, busy, busy. Chairman Gil Johannes reported that members at the Glenwood YMCA sometimes wait up to 30 minutes to get a locker key due to overcrowding. Plans for an additional 100 women's lockers were proposed (women comprise 60 percent of the membership), as well as a private locker area for the men and relocation of the boys' locker room. A long-range planning and study program is underway for future development of the Glenwood Y over the next five years.

### **Various publications, QUAD Games – 1983**

On your marks, get set: Swim, bike, run, cross-country ski. And so it began. The annual QUAD games started in 1983 and remains the region's premier fitness program, even in 2020, when the pandemic forced the QUAD to go virtual. Highmark became the title sponsor in 1997 and continues as sponsor to this day. The QUAD is a way for individuals and families to compete, have fun and stay in shape throughout the year. The YMCA serves as the support system for the events, and proceeds benefit the Y.

### **Minutes, special meeting of the YMCA Board of Directors, YMCA Board of Trustees and Downtown YMCA Board of Managers – Jan. 31, 1983**

Adopted a resolution, recommended by a special Mission Committee, that a major financing project must be undertaken to rebuild the Downtown Y branch. In the meantime, changes must be made to enable the building to increase operating revenues and minimize operating costs. The changes include: dormitory operations at the YMCA will close effective July 1, 1983; a new roof will be installed; the 5th through 7th floors will be sealed off; clean, caulk and waterproof the north and west elevations of the building; install new windows on the third and fourth floors; continue a study to upgrade facilities and generally increase the overall efficiency of the Downtown Y. The resolution also called for raising

about \$300,000 to take the above steps, and at an appropriate date, apply to the Erie Conference for authority to proceed with a Downtown YMCA capital fund drive. (It was reported at the April 19, 1983 meeting that the total renovation drive would be \$650,000, including Neighborhood Assistance tax credits and other funding mechanisms.)

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Feb. 15, 1983**

Peter Delio reported that the Downtown Y needed more equipment in the Nautilus Center. If Nautilus equipment were not added, membership might decline. William Lander suggested that a warm-up room be added to ease the waiting time at the Nautilus Center. Delio suggested that perhaps Nautilus membership fees could increase in 1984.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – June 18, 1984**

The board heard that the Eastside Y is rebuilding its men's sauna and adding racquetball/handball courts. No doubt, a way to work up a good sweat after a good sweat.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Feb. 19, 1985**

The new racquetball/handball courts at the Eastside Y opened on Feb. 6, 1985, with mixed usage in the early going. Evenings are busy at the new courts, but the courts are available during the day. Clinics are being held to explain the game and encourage participation, the board heard. Those clinics must have paid off. At the March 19, 1985, meeting, the board learned about steadily climbing usage. A month later, occupancy had already reached 78 percent. And at the June 18 board meeting, Jack Wear reported that a fourth racquetball court had been ordered, with an expected completion by September, along with a new Nautilus center.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – March 19, 1985**

A different kind of March Madness? Bill Daisley reviewed the success of YMCA sports leagues, pointing to 200 bowling teams and 390 basketball games with a total of 31,000 spectators. The minutes do not reflect over what time period the spectators took in the games, but even assuming a one-year period, that's a lot of hoops watching.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – May 22, 1986**

The Glenwood YMCA board was authorized to borrow up to \$350,000

for racquetball courts and new Nautilus equipment at a 10 percent interest rate. The new courts were scheduled to open March 1, 1987.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Nov. 18, 1986**

Green Day: James Treiber announced that the Downtown Y had received a citation from Penelec for “extraordinary energy conservation measures.”

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – May 19, 1987**

Time to butt out: As part of a trend toward healthier workplaces and workout facilities, the Downtown Y banned smoking. (The Glenwood Y went smoke-free in December 1987; other Y facilities would follow suit.)

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Oct. 20, 1987**

Bill Lander reported on the activities of the Industrial Athletic Association coordinated by the YMCA. A total of 1,800 players on 98 softball teams played in the Industrial and Church leagues. The board feels that the Y is meeting a “real need” that the city could not afford. Also, Industrial League bowling has 128 teams, flag football has 16 teams, Industrial and Church basketball has 45 teams, and a total of 1,000 boys and girls are playing junior church basketball.

### **The Erie Story magazine – December 1988**

The YMCA was founded in 1844 by a 22-year-old from London, England. Seven years later, a ship captain brought the concept to U.S. shores as the first American YMCA was established in Boston. Erie didn’t take long to join. The YMCA was established in Erie on Aug. 27, 1860. The goals of the organization were to “provide for the religious and social needs of young men.” The Y has expanded its scope and mission since those early days. Besides gyms, pools and other equipment for working out, the Y provides co-ed healthy living programs, youth development, and social responsibility programs among its many offerings.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – April 19, 1988**

Build a better body, circa late 1980s. During lunch, Don Sherman and Rick Burr, physical directors at the Downtown Y, demonstrated free-weight training. Free weights are better than Nautilus machines for “actual body building.” Many Downtown members are leaving to go to

facilities offering only free weights because it’s the new trend nationally. The new free-weight room and aerobics area on the third floor will be large, well-equipped, staffed, and hopefully will draw new Y members, the board heard.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Oct. 18, 1988**

Jack Wear gave a proposal for a new swimming pool/natatorium at the Eastside Y. Proposed is an instructional pool with a sliding board and a full-sized pool with a 7-foot deep end for water safety instruction. By the April 18, 1989, meeting, Wear reported that work continued on the pool project, with the overall project cost at \$884,000.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Sept. 9, 1989**

Everybody in the pools! Jack Wear reported that the new pools at the Eastside Y opened Sept. 5. As it turned out, the total cost was \$870,000, including \$78,000 to pay off the old mortgage. An open house – presumably a wet one – was scheduled.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – June 18, 1991**

The Association’s only Chairwoman, Virginia McGarvey provided some statistics from 1990: The Y served 14,877 members, including 606 individuals and 557 families with membership subsidies. Another 5,657 non-members enjoyed some services. She also pointed out that the Y is the largest provider of child care in the area, hosting 350 children each day. Not only that, but lifetime sports leagues engaged thousands of people in church and industrial athletic programs.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Trustees – May 12, 1992**

Rick Dallenbach reported on improvements at the Downtown Y. The work included: Most of the building’s interior painted; men’s health center renovation; south gym floor replacement; replacement of day care carpeting; renovation of strength training center; updated Nautilus Center; new mirrors; painted fitness studio No. 2; a new phone system (at all branches).

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Sept. 15, 1992**

James Fryling reported that the Glenwood Y’s strength training area had been remodeled, among other improvements. Those included refinishing

the gym floor, scrubbing the small pool, installing adjustable basketball hoops to accommodate children's games and putting in new volleyball standards.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Jan. 19, 1993**

Play ball! The Pittsburgh Pirates caravan of players and coaches entertained 400 fans at the Eastside Y on Jan. 18, the board heard.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – May 17, 1994**

Dennis Porto asked the board to consider a YMCA of southern Erie County, which would be located in Edinboro. The board agreed to allow further research on the proposed new branch.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Feb. 21, 1995**

The Y gets in the act for the Parade of the Century – make that the Parade of Two Centuries! The board heard that the Y will participate in the Erie Bicentennial parade on May 27 with a float.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – April 18, 1995**

Are you ready for some football? The board heard that the Pittsburgh Steelers will visit Edinboro during the summer to participate in an auction to raise money for the Edinboro Y.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – April 16, 1996**

The board heard an update on nearly completed renovations at the Y facilities following a \$1.2 million capital campaign called "A Proud History, a Promising Future." The Eastside Y will have a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new gym on April 17; the entire downstairs was renovated and fitness equipment moved into the center area. Work on the Glenwood Y included a new lobby with new offices, an aerobic room and child care areas. The Downtown Y's two new whirlpools are completed, and the pool was drained for repairs and cleaning. Members seem to be very pleased with all the improvements. ... Also, President/CEO Al Schell announced that Craig Latimer, extension services director for the County YMCA, will be one of the torch carriers for the Olympic Run that will pass through Erie on June 10.

### **Case Statement Document for the County YMCA in Edinboro – December 1996**

A local restaurant developer offered to develop four acres of land and an existing building on Route 6N, about one-half mile east of I-79, as the site of the proposed new YMCA building. Then things got cooking. Deliberations showed a firm commitment by the Metro YMCA Board of Directors to move ahead with the project. Their commitment was strongly confirmed with a guaranteed construction loan of \$600,000 and a further commitment to raise another \$250,000 from their own gifts and those of a selected group of Erie-based corporations. Those funds, along with a successful county-based fund drive of \$350,000, would establish the proposed YMCA in southern Erie County.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – March 18, 1997**

The board approved a loan of \$80,465 from the Erie County General Authority to make fourth-floor renovations and buy equipment to accommodate more children for day care services. The Downtown Y has seen an increase of 50 kids since the YWCA closed its Day Care Center. Gerry Vandemerwe, now the executive director of the Downtown Y, reported that the Downtown Y also will receive a \$35,000 grant through the city of Erie toward the renovations. (As of May 1997, a total of 289 children were enrolled in the Child Care Department.) The fourth-floor renovations were completed, Vandemerwe reported at the Sept. 16, 1997, board meeting. By the end of the year, a second-shift, child-care program was added.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Sept. 15, 1998**

Construction update alert! Rett Walker reported that the County YMCA is now under construction on Route 6N in Edinboro. The project has an estimated value of \$1.6 million and will include renovation of the gifted property as well as new construction. General contractor E.E. Austin & Son, Inc. has an estimated 180 days to finish the project.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – April 20, 1999**

Tony Keim reported that the County YMCA branch opened on March 29. (It had been planned for five years.) Six open houses were conducted in March with very positive responses from those who attended. As of

April 19, 696 membership units had been sold, with 70 percent being family units. The community seems to be excited about the Y's impact there. By September, the County Y's membership had grown to 750, with a goal of 1,000 by the year's end.

### **YMCA Annual Report – 1999**

During 1999, the YMCA reached an all-time high membership enrollment with the opening of the County YMCA branch in Edinboro, serving southern Erie County. Membership, both individuals and families, grew 20 percent from 1998. The Y recorded 6,963 memberships: 2,803 at the Eastside Y, 2,315 at the Glenwood Y, 1,022 at the Downtown Y and 823 at the County Y. The Edinboro branch opened at a cost of \$2.1 million. During the year, the Y provided financial assistance to more than 1,900 people needing Y services. Among the many other statistics in the report: Structured fitness programs attracted more than 90,500 participants.

### **Y Chatter employee newsletter– July 1999**

The Y announced it was seeking volunteers on Dec. 31 for First Night Erie (the former non-alcoholic, family oriented event on New Year's Eve). The Downtown Y was one of the activity sites for the event, along with co-sponsoring a 1-mile fun run. Y staffers volunteered for three-hour shifts as they rang in the New Year.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Sept. 21, 1999**

Garry Jennings commented on the renovations that are being started in the front lobby of the Downtown Y to address security concerns. The front desk will be moved closer to the front entrance and turnstiles will be installed. Garry is working with Tim Benson to preserve the historic value of the lobby by coordinating the color scheme and restoring the existing fireplace. The Downtown Y took out an internal loan of \$60,000 for the work. (Once completed, the Y's front lobby drew positive media coverage, board meeting minutes stated.) Meanwhile, at the Eastside Y, two new programs got into the swing of things from the jump. Aerobic kickboxing and swing dancing already had full enrollments.

### **Minutes, Y Budget and Finance Committee – Sept. 21, 1999**

Remember the Y2K scare? Dawn Stearns reported that the property managers at the branches reviewed all equipment and everything appears to be Y2K compliant. As it turned out, Y2K turned out to be A-OK.

### **YMCA Fall Program Guide – 2000**

The guide noted in its 140th anniversary issue that while most people think of the Y for athletics, few realize the importance the Y has placed on education. In fact, the Y established Erie's first library system in 1866 when it spent \$175 to buy books. The library was set up in a former Y building on the west side of Perry Square. The Y was given a private collection of more than 700 books. By 1898, the Y had not only the first library in the area but, by many accounts, one of the finest book collections in western Pennsylvania.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Feb. 15, 2000**

Tom Myers reported that the Downtown Y will offer a new program, an aquatic kickboxing class taught by Todd Humes. The Downtown Y also exceeded its membership goal for the current campaign, even before offering aquatic kickboxing!

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Feb. 20, 2001**

Ken Slaney reported that the new, 1,900-square-foot weight room at the Downtown Y opened with positive feedback from members. New classes, including Y Spyn, Body Bar, CardioKick, and Military Calisthenics, have started and have been well received. More Y Spyn classes were added due to its popularity.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – April 17, 2001**

Who's hungry? Hungry for some cookies? Yes, kids, Sesame Street's Cookie Monster visited the Day Care Program at the Downtown YMCA.

### **Y Chatter employee newsletter– Dec. 28, 2001**

Here's news of Olympian proportions! The Chatter congratulated President/CEO Al Schell for being selected by Coca-Cola to carry the Olympic torch as it passes through Erie on New Year's Day 2002. Al was

scheduled to carry the torch on Sixth Street, by Tracy Elementary School in Millcreek Township, to the peninsula.

### **YMCA Annual Report – 2001**

It was a busy year. Among the highlights: Eastside YMCA opened new soccer fields with 300 youth participants; 321 children participated in a Christian Teen Program at Glenwood; more than 200 African-American teens participated in the Black Achievers Program; the Downtown YMCA began a Body Pump program; the County YMCA held its first youth triathlon, with 129 participants; 3,416 kids, ages 4 to 12, participated in indoor soccer, hockey and basketball; 7,893 kids, from infants through grade school, participated in youth swim instruction; construction started on a \$450,000 child-care addition at the Eastside YMCA; and the Y provided financial assistance to more than 1,200 people per month who needed YMCA services.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – March 19, 2002**

Here's one to remember on Trivia Night! CEO Al Schell told the board about a piece of trivia he had read showing that Pennsylvania has the most YMCAs in the U.S. The minutes don't reflect a number, but a quick Google search shows the state now has 68 YMCA associations and 105 branches. Impress your family and friends with this knowledge, whether it's trivia night or not.

### **Minutes, YMCA annual meeting – June 18, 2002**

A video played at the meeting showcased the Black Achievers Program, later renamed Minority Achievers Program. CEO Al Schell said the program held its annual awards banquet on June 14, with 36 adult achievers being recognized. Also through the program, the Y has reached more 350 youths, in grades 8 through 12, with a budget of \$100,000. It was also reported that the YMCA of Greater Erie had a membership exceeding 17,000 and a budget of more than \$8 million.

### **YMCA of Greater Erie annual report – 2003**

Financial help for those in need. That's an understatement. In 2003 alone, the local YMCA awarded \$168,000 in membership assistance. The financial help came through either 100 percent scholarship memberships or subsidized fees to families, children and individuals. All told, about

2,260 people benefitted from the program as the Y continues to make good on its mission of making sure no one is denied services because they cannot afford to pay.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – June 11, 2003**

Board member Bill Taylor said the YMCA bought the former YWCA building on West Ridge Road in Millcreek Township in May 2002 for \$600,000 for a chance to expand in that area. An ad hoc committee, referred to as a "Dream Team," reviewed several scenarios and said the options now were to sell the property; tear down the building except for the pool and construct a new building; or add onto the building. The initial costs came in at \$1 million, and the latest construction proposal came to \$5 million, "which is a large amount in the economy today." The "Dream Team" recommended keeping the property for future development. The YMCA later sold the property.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Sept. 16, 2003**

Chairman Bill Taylor reported that the Selection and Personnel Committees had met and approved the appointment of Gerry Vandemerwe as acting CEO. Gerry, who began his YMCA career at the Downtown Y in 1989, welcomed the opportunity, and thanked the board and executive team for their support and encouragement. Gerry said he is excited about the role and looks forward to leading the YMCA. The board's decision had staying power: Vandemerwe still leads the YMCA today.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – Sept. 16, 2003**

Shelley Thompson discussed Early Learning University, the Y's new center adjacent to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. The facility opened on Aug. 25, 2003, and is licensed for 111 children. The facility will serve infants through age 15. The plan is to collaborate with Edinboro on student teaching, social work and field placements. It is one of several childcare expansions for the Y to local schools and community-based sites.

### **Minutes, YMCA Board of Directors – March 18, 2004**

Here's something to get exercised about! Shelley Thompson shared with the Board the exciting news that the YMCA of Greater Erie has received the contract to operate the Parks and Recreation Program for the City of



Erie. The YMCA runs the city's Parks and Rec Program at nine city parks to this day. Programs include small group games, board games, fitness, art and music, and a free summer lunch.

### **YMCA of Greater Erie annual report – 2004**

The Times Publishing Company Reader's Poll selected the YMCA as the area's No. 1 pre-school and child care provider in 2004. For many parents, the public declaration verified what they already knew – that if work or other responsibilities take them away from their children, the Y is most prepared for this important role.

### **Erie Times-News – Feb. 20, 2004**

Gerry Vandemerwe was named CEO and president of the YMCA of Greater Erie, the newspaper reported. Vandemerwe took over an operation that then had nearly 500 employees, four branches and 17 satellite sites, and a membership of about 20,000. He moved to Erie from South Africa in the 1980s when he was offered a full scholarship at Gannon University. He stayed in the area after graduation, and is now an important fixture in the community.

### **YMCA of Greater Erie annual report –2005**

The local Y came up big financially again in 2005. It provided \$209,000 in financial assistance for child care and \$200,000 in membership assistance. The Y also coordinated \$57,000 worth of volunteer services from members of the community willing to help as youth sports coaches, fitness instructors, child care assistants and mentors.

### **Erie Times-News – Sept. 26, 2005**

The newspaper has told countless stories about Y members getting in shape – or staying in shape – at Y facilities. But on this day, the newspaper reported that children weren't staying on the sidelines of the fitness boom. The paper, in words and pictures, showed kids, ages, 7 through 9, participating in yoga classes at the Eastside YMCA. Children have been filling the Eastside Y for years, but the paper reported that lately they've been going there for fitness classes, such as yoga and strength training. They like the "cat" and "cow" yoga poses, as well as "downward facing dog." Kids love animals, after all.

### **Erie Times-News –Dec. 21, 2005**

The YMCA sort of looked a gift horse in the mouth, and for good reason. The YMCA board of directors voted to turn down the transfer of the 75-acre Family First Sports Park, citing the park's estimated debt of \$7.5 million as the reason. First opened in 1994, the sprawling sports complex is now owned by a nonprofit after undergoing renovations. ErieBank Sports Park offers two ice rinks, eight outdoor fields, four indoor courts and more.

### **Erie Times-News – Nov. 15, 2006**

The newspaper reported that the YMCA asked the city to permanently close Keats Avenue to accommodate its \$6.5 million expansion and renovation of the Glenwood Park YMCA at 3727 Cherry St. The project included a two-story addition on the east side of the building; 6,000 square feet of fitness space, including an area with glass windows overlooking Peach Street; 1,000 square feet for a child care area, doubling the prior space; 3,000 square feet of multipurpose space; and a facelift of the exterior along West 38th Street. All told, the project (as reported by the newspaper when it opened in 2009) added 36,000 square feet to what had been a 55,000-square-foot building. Earlier in 2006, on July 28, the newspaper reported on a 5,000-square-foot expansion, totaling \$800,000, of the Eastside YMCA on Nagle Road in Harborcreek. That project included a larger weight room, new fitness equipment, more parking and a Hamot Medical Center Therapeutic Rehabilitation and Athletic Care Facility.

### **YMCA of Greater Erie annual report – 2006**

The Y provided the region with \$336,814 in services in the form of child care and membership financial assistance to people who otherwise would be denied such life-enriching opportunities. Not only that, the Y coordinated \$144,000 of volunteer services for community members who offered their time and skills as youth sports coaches, fitness instructors, child care assistants and mentors. It's all part of the Y's mission.

### **YMCA of Greater Erie annual report – 2007**

The Y provided the region with \$313,197 worth of services in the form

of child care and membership financial assistance to those who otherwise would have been denied the life enriching opportunities. Also, the Y coordinated \$124,128 of volunteer services for community members who offered their time and skill as youth sports coaches, fitness instructors, child care assistants and mentors. Here's another number that's a bit heavy: Riffing off the popular TV show, "Biggest Loser," the weight loss program was offered to members. Fourteen people took up the challenge, losing a total of 586 pounds. Following the leadership of Y staffers, they participated in exercise programs and were given sound nutritional advice to meet their goals. As the report states, by the time they completed the program, only their smiles were big.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – Sept. 16, 2008**

Ken Slaney reported that the YMCA of Greater Erie has received \$818,000 from the state to participate in the Pennsylvania Keystone STARS and Pre-K Counts programs. The Erie School District is partnering with the Y to service these children. The Y will be the lead agency in these programs. (Pre-K Counts makes quality pre-kindergarten programs available to Pennsylvania residents at no cost to qualifying families. Y programs are licensed by state agencies and meet national YMCA Quality Check Standards. Like a hotel rating system, Y programs are accredited by the STARS program. All Y programs are either Keystone 3 or 4 accredited, the highest ratings.)

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – Sept. 18, 2009**

The newly expanded and remodeled Glenwood Park YMCA gets rave reviews! Gerry Vandemerwe told the board about the positive comments the Y has been hearing from members about the new-look Glenwood Park YMCA, which includes a two-story addition on the east side of the building, a facelift of the exterior along West 38th Street, more child-care space and a fitness space with glass windows overlooking Peach Street. One month later, at the board's Oct. 20, 2009, meeting the board heard that Glenwood had sold 900 new memberships since Sept. 1.

### **YMCA of Greater Erie annual report – 2009**

The "I Am the Y" profiles in the report demonstrated the YMCA's importance to the community. One member's story, shared anonymously,

told of a tough upbringing in which she and her family were poor. "There were many times my brother and I went without because my mom would trade our food stamps for alcohol. We would be sent house to house with a box to collect food." In the eighth grade, she started hanging out with the wrong crowd, which led to her experimenting with drugs and eventually selling them. An employment program between the Y and her school provided her with the guidance and mentoring she needed to get her life back on track. The woman at the Y who trained her was "amazing. She not only took the time to train me, but also listened to me babble about my life. I was beginning to feel a sense of self-worth for the first time in my life. After 20 years, I am still very involved with the YMCA and truly believe in its mission." Mission accomplished.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – April 20, 2010**

The board heard that Camp Sherwin has a new cabin that will sleep 8 people. By the end of the season, another cabin of that size and two smaller ones will be ready. Camp Sherwin also plans a car cruise, fishing derby and other events. And it has stepped up marketing, with a billboard on Interstate 79, brochures at rest stops and at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center. At a Feb. 14, 2013, Camp Sherwin committee meeting, members heard that bathrooms will be installed at three new cabins near the pond.

### **Erie Times-News – July 18, 2010**

The Erie YMCA of Greater Erie celebrated its 150th year, and Gerry Vandemerwe, chief executive, said in the newspaper that most people think of the Y as just a gym. But he pointed out, among other things, that the Y is the largest child-care provider in Erie County, and promotes youth development, social responsibility, Christian principles and overall wellness. At the time, the Y served more than 30,000 people in the region through its various programs and services, the paper reported. The anniversary celebration was held at Camp Sherwin.

### **The Y's Annual Report to the Community – 2010**

Thousands of children and adults enjoyed Y membership and programs like camp, after-school activities, youth sports, early learning, teen clubs, family activities and wellness programs – thanks to \$898,271 in financial assistance provided to those in need, up from \$728,603

awarded in 2009. Unrelated to all that activity, the County Y in Edinboro partnered with Goodell Gardens & Homestead to offer holistic programming such as yoga, meditation, Pilates and music amid the beautiful flowers and expansive grounds. Namaste!

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – Oct. 18, 2011**

Take a bow! The Glenwood Park YMCA is ranked the No. 1 fitness/wellness center in Erie County, according to the Erie Times-News.

### **The Y's Annual Impact Report to the Community – 2011**

In 2011, more than 35,000 youth, families, adults and seniors engaged in YMCA programs and memberships. Membership alone exceeded 21,000 individuals. The Y also provided \$869,347 in financial assistance to those in need; that resulted in thousands of children and adults participating in Y programs such as camp, afterschool activities, youth sports, teen clubs, family activities and wellness programs.

### **YMCA of Greater Erie news release – May 2012**

Funded by a grant from Highmark Blue Cross-Blue Shield, the YMCA announced that it will offer Y-Splash, a free, basic swimming, water safety and character development program for non-swimmers and beginners. (It later evolved to become known as Safety Around Water.) Taught by YMCA aquatics certified instructors and aimed at children, teens and adults, the comprehensive program also provides opportunities to teach and demonstrate the Y's core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. The Y stressed the importance of water safety: One in four drowning accidents involves children under the age of 15. Classes are offered at the Eastside Family Y and the Glenwood Park Y. Here's an important trivia note: One in every five kids in Erie County learn to swim through the YMCA of Greater Erie.

### **The Y's Annual Impact Report to the Community – 2012**

The Y saluted senior high school students who represented the first graduating class of the Downtown Y's Teen Center. Many of the seniors had been visiting the center since it opened in fall 2008. Through recreation and physical training, they learn about respect for themselves and each other – setting goals and creating a way to achieve them. "The routine keeps me focused and out of trouble. I've made friends here that I

wouldn't have otherwise," Zhamar "Screech" McAdory said in the report. The kids in the program were some of the 35,000 youth, families, adults and seniors who engaged in YMCA programs and memberships. A total of \$856,429 in financial assistance was provided through the Y to those in need, the report states.

### **Minutes, Metro YMCA Board meeting – Dec. 18, 2012**

Splish-splash! The board heard that a 40-foot-by-40-foot fiberglass splash pad, a water feature for up to 45 kids to play in at one time, would be installed at Camp Sherwin at an estimated cost of \$80,000. The pad was tested in fall 2013 before opening in 2014.

### **Minutes, Metro YMCA Board meeting – May 21, 2013**

Gerry Vandemerwe, president/CEO, said that over the past five years, the Y has been putting more resources into Camp Sherwin. A house at the end of the road will come down and clear 3 acres of property. Other developments: A classroom that was moved from the County Y has been wrapped in wood siding. Next, the Y will wrap the Darone Pavilion with the same type of siding. All cabins will be sprayed with a sealer. The Y is also putting bathrooms in the three new cabins, and they will be handicapped accessible. Another cabin with bathrooms has been added across from Harrington Hall. Electric meters have been installed on all seasonal sites. At Harrington Hall, a popular venue for weddings, interior upgrades include new lighting, fans, and paneling, with bathroom renovations next on the agenda. A fishing pier was also remodeled.

### **The Y's Annual Impact Report to the Community – 2013**

Some fun facts gleaned from the report: Y staff and volunteers stuffed more than 1,000 turkey dinner baskets for Erie's homeless. A total of 6,039 kids and adults participated in swimming lessons through the Y. The Meals for Kids program at the Eastside Y served 1,280 free, hot meals, providing families with a healthy alternative to the fast-food drive through. Y membership increased from 24,638 in 2012 to 24,886 in 2013.

### **YMCA Annual Impact Report to the Community – 2014**

The Y took big steps in 2014 to "walk the walk and talk the talk" to support teen-led programs focused on cognitive and social growth;

early-learning readiness programs to build the assets of informal caregivers; healthy eating and physical activity standards for kids; lifestyle and chronic disease prevention programs to improve overall health and well-being for adults and kids. The Y also focused on water safety programs to teach kids and adults skills to reduce their risk of drowning. That's especially important as we live on Lake Erie. The Y taught more than 6,000 kids and adults to swim, trained more than 200 people as lifeguards and swim instructors and offered swimming experiences to the differently-abled through our adaptive swim program. That's making quite a splash!

### **Erie Times-News – Feb. 10, 2014**

Craig Latimer, known as "The Quadfather" for founding the annual High-mark Quad Games competition, stepped down after 31 years of leading and organizing the four-sport event: swimming, biking, running and cross-country skiing. Latimer, former director of the Edinboro YMCA, offered "a punch-line answer," as the newspaper put it, for moving on: "I've got so many (spare) Quad Games T-shirts at home, I can't close my drawers." On a serious note, Latimer said it was time to move on. The event leadership didn't stray far from the Latimer family tree. His daughter-in-law, Kelly Latimer, runs the Quad these days. Groan if you want, but call her "The Quaddaughter."

### **Erie Times-News – Feb. 19, 2014**

Frank J. "Rawhide" Bohun died on this date at the age of 98, according to the obituary in the newspaper. He was a fixture at the Downtown Y, and thus it was only fitting for the Y to rechristen its north gym to honor Bohun, a local sports legend. Bohun's obit lists some of his sporting accomplishments: He reigned four times as a World Horseshoes Champion and 16 times as Pennsylvania Horseshoes Champion. He also played in the National YMCA Basketball Championships. What's more, he's in three Halls of Fame: the Metro Pennsylvania State Horseshoe Hall of Fame, the YMCA Basketball Hall of Fame, in Springfield, Mass., for his foul shooting, and the National Horseshoe Hall of Fame, in Springfield, Ill. He was selected as one of the Erie Times-News' 100 athletes of the 20th Century and voted as the 2005 Pennsylvania Senior Athlete. He

knew his way around a dance floor, too. He loved polkas and was an accomplished ballroom dancer.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – Sept. 16, 2014**

Cherie Kinem, director of the YMCA Kids Clubs, told the board about the track and field program for the children who participated. The children trained and participated in many competitions, which are just some of the Kids Clubs programs. The program, initiated in 1990, helps to build self-esteem for children and gives them an experience that they might not otherwise enjoy. The year-round outreach program for inner-city youth living in public housing is also a strategy to reduce neighborhood youth violence. Kids Clubs serves youths, ages 5 through 18, at John Horan Garden Apartments and Erie Heights/PineView public housing. At this meeting, the board saw pictures of the kids participating in meets along with the ribbons they received for competing.

### **Downtown YMCA Pamphlet and YMCA website, Fifth-Floor Changes/Teen Center – 2015**

Learning in a cool new space is, well, cool. A \$515,000 renovation concluded with the grand opening of the Downtown Y's Community Learning Center, built for the growing programming needs of kids, teens and aging adults. It's used mainly as functioning programming space for the Y's Teen Center, then used during off hours for preschool and older active adult programming. The Teen Center is for kids, ages 12-18, and they can choose to participate in structured activities that interest them or just "chill." Programs include homework tutoring, music, creative expressions, cosmetology, boxing, youth and government, dance, field trips, sports, the David Matthews Composition School and special events. Whew!

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – Feb. 16, 2015**

Snow day! The board's meeting was cancelled due to heavy snow.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – May 19, 2015**

The YMCA isn't spinning its wheels when it comes to creative ways to feed children. The board heard about a new "food and fun" bus, with the vehicle – a remodeled 72-passenger school bus with a custom-built

kitchenette and seating for children – driving into food deserts in Erie County to offer healthy meals and teach how to make them. A \$25,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation, \$10,000 from the Erie Community Foundation/Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, and \$5,000 from the Arby's Foundation provided the seed money for the \$60,000 project, according to a Y press release. The Y donated a 2008 school bus and secured another \$20,000 of in-kind professional services to complete the project. The Y renovated the bus in 2016. It's part of the Y's free summer meal program to ensure that fewer teens and younger kids go hungry. The free meal program has operated since 2010.

### **Erie Times-News – Oct. 16, 2016**

About 260 people turned back the clock at Waldameer Park's Rainbow Gardens to relive the YMCA Y-Co dances of the 1950s and 1960s, the newspaper reported. The Y-Co reunion dances began, as a celebration of the Glenwood Park Y's 50th anniversary, in 2012. You were considered to be cool if you attended the Saturday night teen dances, back in the day, at the Downtown Y or Glenwood Park Y, according to the Times-News. "It was easily the most popular and also the longest running social activity for young people in its day," the paper said, adding that Senior Y-Co dances were held from 1958 until 1968 and Junior Y-Co dances ran until 1974.

### **The Y's Annual Impact Report to the Community – 2016**

The report shows that one in five kids in Erie County live with food insecurity. So the Y stepped up in a big way, providing 417,000 meals and snacks as healthy food choices for children. Some lip-smacking examples: 11,316 apples substituted for high-fat snacks; 8,332 gallons of healthy, low-fat milk served instead of sugary drinks; and a "food and fun bus" served 25,000 meals to kids in underserved neighborhoods. Here's another eye-popping number: More than \$1 million in services and financial assistance was donated to 9,136 children, teens, families and seniors so they could live healthier and happier lives.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors meeting and YMCA press release – September 2017**

The Eastside Family Y turned 40 in style, with a brand new look. The 1970s-era tile and dimly lit fitness areas were replaced with a \$2.5

million addition and renovation to a facility that opened in 1977. A new first-floor, multi-purpose room provides important space for educational training, community gatherings, youth activities and much more. A new, 6,000-square-foot annex on the first floor features new equipment, such as cardio machines that synch to FitBit and other activity trackers as well as free, high-speed internet to binge on Netflix and Hulu. Yeah, this isn't your grandmother's or grandfather's YMCA. Not only that, renovations to more than 2,000 square feet on the lower level repurposed the space into a popular interval-style training center with battle ropes, tires, boxing bags, suspension straps and other challenges. There's more: A new classroom, Eastside Y Early Learning Academy (an investment of \$873,000), serves low-income, at-risk children and their families through Early Head Start. The classroom, which opened in March, was built through a federal grant that GECAC received. Tina Carter, executive director of the Eastside Family Y, reported on the completed expansion at the board's Sept. 19, 2017 meeting. Carter gave a shout-out to GE Transportation for donating more than 200 volunteer hours and \$10,000 to complete the multi-purpose room. She noted that 87 new members signed up during an open house from Sept. 10-16. More sign-ups are expected once the weather turns cooler.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors meeting – Sept. 19, 2017**

Talk about powering through the summer! Jill Simmons, vice president of Child Care, reported at the board's meeting on the success of the 60 Power Scholars at Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary School. Many of the scholars were non-English speaking. The Power Scholars Academy was launched in 2013 by the YMCA of the USA and BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life), in collaboration with local YMCA associations and schools as an academic and enrichment program to prevent an academic slide during the summer. An evaluation showed that Erie Power Scholars in grades K-5 gained 1.5 months of literacy skills and three months of math skills, according to a joint YMCA-BELL press release. BELL is a national leader in evidence-based summer learning and after-school programs for pre-K to 8th grade students that closes the achievement gap in underserved communities.



### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors meeting – Nov. 19, 2017**

Changing with the times: The Y properties expanded the no smoking policy to include e-cigarettes and vaping.

### **The Y's Annual Impact Report to the Community – 2017**

What's in a number? A lot, as it turns out. The report offers a lot of compelling statistics, not the least of which is this impactful equation: 786 volunteers put in 25,160 hours for a total estimated work value of \$168,477. Here's another one that means a lot: The Y and its programs served 44,600 people.

### **YMCA of Greater Erie news release – Feb. 15, 2018**

The YMCA of Greater Erie announced that it was joining more than 700 YMCA Associations nationwide and in Puerto Rico in a reciprocal membership benefit program. Erie Y members can use any of those other Y facilities, at no extra cost. Unlike the previous six-limit maximum usage for visiting Y members traveling in the U.S., the new program greatly expands how many times Y members may use facilities in other communities – up to 28 days.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – May 21, 2019 and March 19, 2019**

The board heard that the caretaker for Camp Sherwin has relocated to the house that the Y purchased for \$95,000. The house is at the end of camp driveway, 8608 West Lake Road, Lake City. The house that the caretaker had used is ready for rental, potentially for \$1,200 per week. The purchase of the property will aid in the long-term planning at the camp. At the May 21 meeting, the board heard that the third phase of a water retention project at Camp Sherwin has been completed. The project will help direct rain water from Route 5 and will slow the erosion of the bluff. (According to board minutes from Sept. 15, 2015, a total of \$140,000 was proposed to be spent on erosion-control projects at Camp Sherwin.) The importance of the project could not be overstated. At the board's March 21, 2017 meeting, it heard that without controls at Camp Sherwin, the camp eventually would lose the road, pavilion and camping sites. Gerry Vandemerwe, president/CEO, said when he first started at the Y more than 20 years ago, a cabin fell into the lake due to erosion.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – Nov. 19, 2019**

The board heard some good news: Erie's Choice Awards bestowed the YMCA of Greater Erie with the honor of first place among fitness centers in Erie.

### **Erie Times-News – Feb. 16, 2020**

The YMCA of Greater Erie cracks the Top 20 among employers in Erie County, ranking 19th of 50 employers listed by the newspaper. The period was for the second quarter of 2019. Pre-pandemic, the YMCA employed just over 700 people.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – May 27, 2020**

Like everyone else, the YMCA of Greater Erie adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tammy Roche, vice president of membership, marketing and financial development, presented a community impact update regarding the pandemic: The Y has excelled at virtual health and wellness resources. The Y is using Facebook Live and Instagram to connect with members and the general public through virtual classes, with both Facebook and Instagram reaching about 11,000 views each week. During the pandemic shutdown, the Y is providing childcare for the life-sustaining workforce in the community. The Y is also serving the community with about 1,200 meals per week at four locations, and hopes to add the Eastside Y as a distribution location. The meals, a partnership with the USDA and the American Heart Association, are intended as dinner since the schools continue to serve lunch to children. Volunteers are calling senior members to check on them since social isolation is a concern. Donors have received phone calls updating them on the Y's community involvement and the Y's COVID Emergency Response Fund.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – July 21, 2020**

Coronavirus updates from various staff members: The Y's Meals for Kids annual program has become even more important during the pandemic. The Y has been serving about 3,000 meals and snacks per week, and since March, 63,000 meals have been served to families in need. WQLN is providing literacy kits with the meal distribution. ... The Parks & Rec program has been running since June in nine city parks, with modified activities to adhere to social distancing. Kids are getting healthy

recreation time, a safe space and free lunches Monday through Friday. Virtual Healthy & Wellness continues to offer programs via Facebook and YouTube. In-person classes are offered outdoors through a reservation system to control group size. ... As for child care, attendance is about 50 percent of what is typical for summer care. Camp Sherwin and the four main Y sites are offering summer camp. Also, Camp Sherwin and the Eastside Y are offering outdoor swimming for camp kids and all locations are offering staycation field trips. ... The Glenwood, Eastside and County Y all opened in the first phase on June 29, and the second phase reopening came on July 13 with restrictions. ... The Downtown Y presents a challenge for reopening due to its age and layout. The plan called for reopening in September after children have returned to school. The outdated ventilation system will need to be addressed.

### **Minutes, YMCA Metro Board of Directors – July 21, 2020**

And finally, some good news in the year of a pandemic. The Non-Profit Partnership awarded the YMCA of Greater Erie as the 2020 nonprofit of the year, said Tammy Roche, vice president of membership, marketing and financial development. Banners went up in Perry Square to recognize this success as well as the Y's 160 years of service to the Erie community.

**The Erie YMCA, one of Erie's oldest and original social service agencies, started to serve the community in 1860. Since then, millions of men, women, seniors, handicapped and youth, from six weeks through college years, have received necessary and meaningful services.**

**What follows is a history and timeline of the YMCA of Greater Erie – from YMCA documents and other records and from the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership Magazine**

## **TIMELINE**

**1866:** YMCA library opens. It later became Erie's public library.

**1881:** Develops in the Erie community the first physical education classes around the YMCA Triangle of mind, body and spirit.

**1882:** Starts adult education night classes, with the first English classes for immigrants starting in 1900.

**1896:** First basketball game features the Erie "Y" versus Allegheny College.

**1904:** Erie's first swimming pool and water safety program.

**1908:** Assists in organizing the first public playground.

**1911:** Constructs the YMCA building at West 10th and Peach streets.

**1914:** Joins with 11 other social service agencies to organize the Erie Social Service Federation, today known as the United Way of Erie County.

**1920:** Organizes, finances and houses the Inter-Church Federation, which later became known as Inter-Faith Ministry with all faiths participating.

**1934:** Starts Youth Extension programs in the city's school gyms and pools.

**1951:** Begins suburban work with outreach programs in the West County and North East areas.

**1957:** Starts the Downtown YMCA Erie's first religious non-denominational Dial Inspiration daily phone message.

**1961:** Design and construction starts on the Glenwood Park YMCA around the concept of total family programming, the 10th in the nation and first in Erie.

**1962:** The Glenwood Park YMCA opens.

**1967:** Designs and initiates the Port-A-Pool program for the City of Erie.

**1972:** In collaboration with Erie County Juvenile Court judges, starts a program using Y facilities to rehabilitate and mainstream juveniles on probation.

**1976:** Designs and starts to build on the east side of Erie a collaborative YMCA facility with a public outdoor pool; the branch in Harborcreek Township opened in 1977, with an official dedication in January 1978.

**1980:** Begins prayer breakfasts for elected officials and community leaders.

**1983:** Major renovations to the Downtown YMCA, including closing of the dormitory and coffee shop and the addition of women's locker rooms.

**1983:** Four-sport (swimming, biking, running, cross-country skiing) Highmark QUAD games starts; proceeds benefit YMCA of Greater Erie

**1986:** Addition of racquetball courts at the Eastside YMCA.

**1987:** Addition of racquetball courts at the Glenwood Park YMCA.

**1988:** Capital drive of \$280,000 to install a swimming pool and park complex at Camp Sherwin. Addition to the Eastside Y for a new strength training center. Also, creation of day care centers at all three branch YMCAs.

**1990:** YMCA Kids Clubs outreach program begins for youths, ages 5-18, at Erie public housing complexes.

**1990:** The annual Healthy Kids Day begins in April. Hundreds of children throughout Erie County come together (as do kids through YMCAs nationwide) to learn how to stay physically and intellectually active all summer, and families are given tips to replicate at home.

**1993:** Camp Sherwin and the Downtown YMCA combine Day Camps.

**1994:** Establishes "outpost" facility to serve southern Erie County.

**1995:** Conducts capital campaign for \$1.2 million to renovate three branch facilities for the 21st Century. Child care expands to four sites throughout Erie County.

**1998:** Begins construction of \$1.6 million County Branch facility in Edinboro.

**1999:** Opens new County Y facility in March in Edinboro to serve southern Erie County. Child care grows to 14 locations with more than 1,000 children enrolled.

**2000:** The Y2K fears turn out to be unfounded as equipment and other computerized items work as the clock strikes to start a new millennium.

**2001:** Begins construction of \$450,000 child care addition at Eastside YMCA.

**2002:** Expands the parking lot at Glenwood Park YMCA.

**2003:** The YMCA of Greater Erie opens Early Learning University, a new childcare center adjacent to Edinboro University for infants through age 15. It is one of several childcare expansions for the Y to local schools and community-based sites over the years.

**2004:** The YMCA of Greater Erie is hired to operate the Parks and Recreation Program for the City of Erie. The YMCA runs the city's Parks and Rec Program at nine city parks to this day.

**2005:** The YMCA board of directors turns down a proposed transfer of the 75-acre Family First Sports Park, citing the park's estimated debt.

**2008:** The Y opens the Early Learning Center on Poplar Street.

**2009:** Completes Glenwood Y renovation project, adding 36,000 square feet to what had been a 55,000-square-foot building and various amenities, including a fitness space with glass windows overlooking Peach Street.

**2010:** The Downtown Y celebrates its 100th anniversary of serving the Erie community.

**2010:** The Erie YMCA of Greater Erie celebrates its 150th year, with festivities at Camp Sherwin.

**2010:** Camp Sherwin gets four new cabins and steps up marketing with a billboard and brochures.

**2010:** First year of YMCA Camp Sherwin Apple Festival, featuring hay and pony rides, farm animals, apple treats and more.

**2010:** The YMCA Y-Co dance reunions began as a fundraiser.

**2011:** Start of annual YMCA 3-on-3 outdoor basketball tournament.

**2011:** Glenwood Park YMCA ranked the No. 1 fitness/wellness center in Erie County, according to the Erie Times-News.

**2012:** Glenwood Park YMCA commemorates its 50th anniversary.

**2012:** Camp Sherwin celebrates its 100th anniversary of serving the community.

**2012:** Annual Run-A-Muck Mud Run, a 1.5-mile course of 20 obstacles, begins at Eastside Family YMCA.

**2012:** The YMCA of Greater Erie offers Y-Splash (later called Safety Around Water) that offers a free, basic swimming, water safety and character development series for non-swimmers and beginners. (This is just the latest learn-to-swim program offered by the Y.)

**2014:** A large fiberglass splash pad, a water feature for up to 45 kids at a time, opens at Camp Sherwin at an estimated cost of \$80,000.

**2015:** Teen Center opens on the fifth floor of the Downtown YMCA after \$515,000 in renovations.

**2016:** The Y, with help from donors, renovates a 72-passenger school bus into a "food and fun" bus, complete with custom-built kitchenette and seating for children. It's part of the Y's commitment to providing healthy meals to underserved neighborhoods.

**2017:** Eastside Family Y turns 40 and celebrates with a \$2.5 million addition and renovation.

**2017:** Annual Lake Erie Cyclefest bicycling tour of Erie County, with proceeds benefitting YMCA, WQLN and EmeryCare, kicks into gear.

**2017:** YMCA of Greater Erie begins Powers Scholars Academy for K-5 grade students to increase literacy and math skills in the summer. The program is powered by BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life).

**2018:** YMCA of Greater Erie joins list of more than 700 YMCA Associations offering access to facilities nationwide in membership reciprocity program.

**2018:** The Downtown YMCA's Teen Center and music program are featured on ABC's Good Morning America program.

**2019:** The YMCA Metro Board learns that the third phase of a water retention project at Camp Sherwin has been completed. The project will help direct rain water from Route 5 and will slow the erosion of the bluff.

**2019:** The YMCA of Greater Erie is awarded first place in the Erie's Choice Awards for fitness centers in Erie.

**2020:** YMCA of Greater Erie reacts to COVID-19 pandemic with virtual programming and other innovations before gradually reopening some facilities and programs.

## OUR MISSION

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

## OUR FOCUS

Youth Development,  
Healthy Living and  
Social Responsibility

## OUR CAUSE

To strengthen  
community

YMCA OF GREATER ERIE  
31 W. 10th Street  
Erie, PA 16501  
[ymcaerie.org](http://ymcaerie.org)

