



December 2020

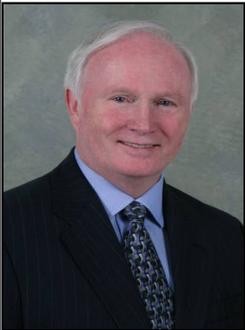
BRIDGES

PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP OF YMCA RETIREES



NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

“Life is what happens...when you’re making other plans” was never more of a truism than in 2020, as a pandemic gripped the world. As I write this, 79,000,000 cases are reported world-wide, with 1,728,775 deaths. In



the USA we have 18.3M cases and over 325,000 deaths. However, on the bright side, the world scientific community worked overtime and created several vaccines, in record time, that are hoped to stem the tide of COVID 19. Also, people found creative ways to stay in touch with loved ones and to serve their respective communities. As YMCA retirees, we

can be thankful that we did not have to manage a YMCA during a pandemic, and our hats are off to those active staff who have led their respective communities at this most difficult time. And our prayers are especially offered to those staff families who have been furloughed, or permanently laid off.

2018 – 2022 WFYR Goals: Despite the pandemic causing a slow down on certain goals, we continue to make progress on others. **Maintaining fellowship among our colleagues** remains our foundational goal, and through ZOOM technology, or simple phone calls and emails, we have stayed in touch with YMCA retirees, and sent messages of love and support. Our special focus on **Secours Speciaux**, WFYR’s charity of choice, has been achieved. Many countries are on target to double the amount of money donated to this important cause. In addition, with the help of the *World Brotherhood Fund* endowment created in the USA, a special \$200,000 gift was made to ensure grants could be made to almost 90 retirees to help them through the economic turmoil caused by the pandemic. With leadership from **John Naylor**, the World YMCA web site is providing better access to this important emergency assistance fund for staff and retirees. Our **Global Retirement Initiative** was making good progress, but the pandemic has caused a slow down, as local YMCAs focus on survival, rather than long term planning. However, we hope to have three new pilot agreements in

place by 2022 with one each in South Asia, Africa and LACA. The pandemic became the focus of our fourth goal, of providing support to the newly elected **Secretary General of the World YMCA**. WFYR volunteers were instrumental in securing additional funding for Secours Speciaux and in identifying retirees in need. In addition, the WFYR chair served on the committee that distributed grants from the newly created *Solidarity Fund*. Almost One Million in US dollars were granted between the two funds.

2022 World Council: With vaccines on the horizon, WFYR is hopeful a face-to-face world meeting will take place in Aarhus, Denmark in July, 2022. WFYR members interested in attending this quadrennial event should contact **Jerry Prado Shaw** and let him know you would like to receive advance information. His email is jerrypradoshaw@hotmail.com. We always raise Travel Funds to assist participants in attending this event and **Norris Lineweaver** has agreed to chair that fund-raising effort. Starting in 2021 we will take the next steps in planning for this event with the recruitment of a *Nominating Committee* and an *Event Program Planning Committee*. WFYR members interested in helping in these areas should contact me at dwyer_philip@yahoo.com.

Another truism is “Hope Springs Eternal”. Thus, I wish each of you, your family and friends, a better 2021.

Phil Dwyer

Important Notice

This edition *Bridges* has been distributed only electronically. The Philadelphia YMCA is still unable to provide its generous support, and mail service around the world remains disrupted. Please see back cover of this issue for a way you can help distribute *Bridges*.

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(If we missed your group or erred, please let us know.)

**THOUGHTS FROM
THE EDITORS**

Hopefully, you are receiving this edition of Bridges in time for us to wish you blessings and safety for the holiday season. We are still in the pandemic's merciless grip so our Christmas and New Year gatherings will be limited or non-existent. We will miss sharing warmth and togetherness, but we hope and pray that this time next year there will no fear of hugging our loved ones. 2021 will be the first year that we all look forward to being vaccinated and somewhat confident knowing that our age places us in the priority category.

Your editors continue to isolate in our summer home on a barrier island known for strong breezes from the bay and ocean during the winter months. Instead of being chilling, this year the breezes are most comforting as we can venture out for walks and activities without constantly wearing our masks that are always around our necks these days.

Activities of YMCA retiree groups around the world have been limited to ZOOM sessions and dealing with the uncertainties of planning events in 2021. The work of the WFYR leadership team reflects the uncertainty but has not deterred the group from raising funds and awareness of the plight of communities and YMCA workers around the world. Their efforts have generated significant funds and increased vital allocations for Y workers and retirees impacted by the pandemic.

On a personal note, we would like to share a gift that Len crafted for his mother nearly seventy years ago. The nativity scene has been part of the Wilson Christmas tradition every year since and reflects the love of a mother in so many ways. The celebration of the birth of Christ provides us with faith and confidence that we are forever comforted and guided by our loving Mother and Father above.

We sincerely wish you all... A very Merry Christmas and blessings in the coming year.



Len and Joyce Wilson

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WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Secours Speciaux

„Heartfelt appreciation for Secours support and holiday plans from Bonnie Mairs, Chair, Secours Speciaux

Different traditions this Christmas - No doubt what I do will be like many, many of us who are retired and who elect to stay home to stay safe: write and call family and friends to wish them a happy holiday; put up Christmas decorations to lift our spirits and those looking in our windows; order gifts online. I have learned to bake bread and to set up Zoom meetings and I will do both this season.



**Bonnie Mairs,
Chair, Secours
Speciaux**

I would like to thank all who have contributed to Secours Speciaux, the World YMCA’s Emergency Fund. With your help, we have been able to respond to traditional emergencies as well as the impact of the pandemic.

Secours Speciaux - The Fund received a very generous grant from the US YMCA’s World Brotherhood Fund to help support needy YMCA retirees around the world during the pandemic. We sent grants to 77 retirees this summer and will send a second round in time for Christmas. Carlos Sanvee, Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCAs, included a letter thanking the retirees for their service. The replies have been touching. Some mention how the money has helped them as their pensions are very small. Some mention their countries’ high inflation rate or their own ill health but all are thankful not only for the money but also for being remembered. A Latin American retiree expresses his feelings beautifully below.

Here is the letter;

Dear Mr. Sanvee:

I sincerely would like to express my gratitude to you, the World YMCA, and the Secours Speciaux Committee for your generous support and solidarity with your fellow YMCA retirees during this unprecedented pandemic times, which is affecting the world.

Through this letter I would like to acknowledge that I did receive the \$500 dollars in cash, funds that I will be use to support myself, and hopefully others, while we continue under mandatory quarantine, that not allows me to continue working. For individuals of my age the vaccine is our best hope.

I would also like to highlight that this act of solidarity is making a deep impact in our hearts, knowing that the movement has not

forgotten their former YMCA workers. Personally, more than ever before, I want to let you know that I have experienced a strong and beautiful feeling of belonging to a great organization, where its active leaders continue fostering and practicing our most caring values embodied in our logo of John 17:21.

It is very moving to imagine that fellow colleagues so far away from my country thought of those who might be in a vulnerable situation, and extended their caring hands forming a circle of love and virtue among people.

I would also like to take the opportunity to wish you, your family and extended YMCA family my warmest wishes for a Merry Christmas, and a new peaceful beginning of the year, always with hope, love, and uncontainable joy.

May the Lord continue blessing your life, as He has blessed us with your leadership at the World YMCA.

Beirut Port Explosion

During the first 4 weeks after the explosion, the YMCA of Lebanon team focused, as a first phase, on responding swiftly to support families by restoring their homes. For 25 days straight, young volunteers were mobilized from the Bekaa, Beirut and North of Lebanon, to come to the most affected zones in Beirut, helping in picking up the rubble, cleaning and covering windows with plastic sheets (60 to 70 volunteers on average were engaged daily in this initiative; YMCA provided the volunteers with transportation, food, equipment and material)



YMCA Teams Help Re-Build Beirut following Port Explosion



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Y's Retired of the UK *by Graham Clarke*

What a difference a year makes! I will restrain myself from using the cliches that abound at the moment which underline the uniqueness of our situation.

However, never would any of us have imagined last year that this Christmas would be so different with its many restrictions, loss of carol services and other traditional festivities and, sadly for some, the absence of loved ones.

However, these circumstances do make us look at Christmas in a renewed way, for while the things around us may be strange and unfamiliar, the importance of all that we are celebrating becomes all the more into focus.

Christmas is the celebration of the light of God's love coming to shine in the darkness; Christmas is the celebration of hope of a glorious future yet to come arriving in the form of the Christ child. Christmas is the celebration of the coming into our messy and suffering world of The Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace at a time when we all need to know the comfort and encouragement that only He can bring.

Yes, it is sad and painful to know that we will not experience Christmas as we have done in the past, but these are the fundamental things of Christmas which we need to hold on to, the truths which sustain us and give us (and the rest of the world when it pauses to listen!) the confidence of knowing that we are not alone, that we are accompanied by the power and grace of God in all that we face now and in the future.

My prayer for each one of us is that, as we remember the birth of Jesus, we remember not just the darkness of the night but the also the light of the angels penetrating that darkness with the wonder and glory of God as they brought the message 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to all people on whom his favour rests'

May you have a Peaceful and Blessed Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year



Dear friends, it is with sadness and yet with joy of a life well lived, that I share the news that our dear friend and colleague Reg Wake, having reached his 100th birthday this year, has passed away — a life richly lived and dedicated to a Movement he loved.

David H. Smith

News from Scotland *by Jillian Law*

Scran Academy was a local catering social enterprise supporting some of the most vulnerable young people in an area of deprivation in Edinburgh to develop first hand work experience in the food industry. When lockdown hit in late March their work like YMCAs across Scotland had to look at how they could best support people with their face-to-face work ceasing. Using their catering expertise they set up a free meals programme. YMCA Scotland partnered with Scran Academy to support volunteer recruitment and co-ordination, policy development and logistical support.

The partnership in numbers:

114,109 healthy free meals delivered

3,353 people fed

200 volunteers

24,063 deliveries made

37,884 volunteer hours

'I applaud you for services above and beyond to care for the most vulnerable in our community. Modern Day Saints!'

Kimberley, a single mum says, 'it makes my son's day, just to see someone else. It improves our mental health as well. It means that at the end of a lockdown day we've got a family, home-made meal that's healthy for the kids so it means SO much'





WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

YMCA Alumni (USA)

Opinion: Is it really ‘the worst of times?’

Many of us will recall reading Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* in high school. We may not remember many of the book’s finer details. But we most likely do recall the phrase “It Was the Best of Times; It Was the Worst of Times” and that it had something to do with the French Revolution. It, in fact, tells us about a time of extreme opposites without any “in-betweens.”

Will we be able to use the same analogy as we reflect back on the year 2020? I suspect many of us will think it was only the worst of times: a major health crisis defined by a global pandemic and a country deeply divided along racial, ethnic and political lines.



Hundreds of thousands of people across the globe are dying as a result of COVID-19; businesses are shuttered; community events have been cancelled and so many YMCAs have been devastated and are struggling to survive.

Has there been anything about 2020 that we could say was positive?

Most of us have been spending more time with our immediate family. That’s a good thing. We’re completing long-delayed home projects. We have time to read all those books we’ve had been wanting to read for so long. Perhaps we’ve pursued a new hobby or pastime such as playing the piano, woodworking and even taking on jigsaw puzzles again.

America is a very diverse country. Our diversity has made us strong in so many ways. Perhaps the tragedies and losses of 2020 will strike a positive note that reminds us that “We the People” are created equal and all have the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We probably will never judge 2020 as the “best of times.” But we can surely pick out the positive aspects. Let’s all learn from the good things that occurred this year and remember those. Hopefully the “best of times” are on the horizon.

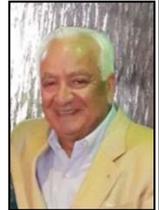
John Coduri, member of New England Chapter and former Director of the Association of YMCA Professionals (AYP)

Latin America-Caribbean

by Roberto Uria Mendéz, Vice President WFYR AREA LACA



My dear retired colleagues from the ACM/ YMCA in Latin America and the Caribbean and other continents, we are reaching the end of this year, which was not normal due to this globalized pandemic.



There was a lot of sad news in our homes, family and friends, making us go through moments of great concern. On the other hand, I would like to thank my colleagues at LACA and WFYR for the support they received to continue with my responsibility as Vice President of Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in organizing our AGAPE 2021 meeting to be held in São Paulo, Brazil. We hope that next year we will be allowed to be together to have moments of fraternization where our joy is the most important point among all retired colleagues, and everyone is in good health.

I thank my Executive Committee of the LACA Area for the support received throughout this period, planning our meeting. Nor can I fail to thank the support of our colleague **Philip Dwyer**, president of WFYR, in encouraging our area. I take this opportunity, at the end of the year, to wish all colleagues a MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR, with health, peace and prosperity and 2021 will be filled with much good news for family and friends!

Philippines Typhoon Goni/Rolly Appeal



On November 1, the Philippines was hit by the super typhoon Goni., also known as Rolly. Nearly 400,000 persons were displaced and 25,000 homes destroyed. World YMCA has launched an appeal to support local YMCAs.



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Presentation for Brazilian YMCA retirees Professional Training for YMCA Secretaries by Jerry Prado Shaw, October , 2020

Jerry Prado Shaw relates his 72 plus years of personal experiences, spiritual growth and deeper understanding of what it means to engage in “Training Professional Secretaries of YMCA.” He particularly notes that when only ten years of age, he was encouraged to join the baseball team He was told that “the training would be more fun than the games.” Y training taught teamwork and encouraged community service programs. Fraternal Secretary, **Stanley Susan** helped Jerry access Christian values that would profoundly build up his character. That early contact helped form later decisions to embrace the career of YMCA Secretary.



Active director of YMCA for more than 42 years, Jerry Prado Shaw began his career in La Paz, Bolivia, in 1960, since then assuming different leadership responsibilities within the movement in Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama and the United States.

His remarks help persons become more familiar with the term YMCA Secretary that either evolved from a Y board member in Philadelphia during the late 1800’s being selected to receive a stipend for managing the Y as a profession [Search for the background on the great **John Wanamaker**] or from a search at Springfield college for a title that was not minister, pastor or Christian educator. Jerry also provides excellent background on the growth of professional Y training at Springfield College as well as European and South American models. Jerry points to the development of management and skill training necessary to prepare for a career in the Y, but also fully appreciates the spiritual and character development values important for the role: “The harvest is great and the workers are few.” [Matthew 9:37]

After a long career in the Y, he feels that he has not really retired. He remembers a brief conversation chatting with **Paul Limbert** when Limbert was 93. [Limbert lived to celebrate his 100th birthday and fulfilled a vow to write his history of a century of Y memories.] . Limbert left Jerry with words he would never forget. “If you think you are going to retire from YMCA, you are wrong.”

Jerry reminds all retirees that you can retire from a profession, from a position, from a job, but you can never retire from a vocation, especially when that profession calls for service for life. He is reminded of good friend **Oscar Escalada Hernandez** on addressing the YUSA new CEO Institute. Oscar reminded all present that the term CEO must become a Commitment to Empower Others. Jerry’s career and his remarks build upon that declaration.

*We encourage **Bridges’** readers to contact dear friend and Past WFYR Chair for a full copy of his motivating and educational presentation at jerrypradoshaw@hotmail.com.*

Y Alumni of Canada

When is this going to be over?

by Franco Savoia

What is usually a traditional time of gift-giving, family gatherings, and visiting and sharing with friends, looks a little different this holiday season. This year, my three brothers and sister have exchanged our usual Christmas Eve dinner, made of 12 fish dishes, and our Boxing Day gift exchange for staying at home and connecting virtually

As “Y elders,” I encourage all of us to continue to bring joy to everyone in our lives and spread holiday cheer. Let’s allow our years of experience and wisdom to generate hope for those around us by living out the expression: “This too shall pass.” Take the time to reach out to your families, friends, and neighbors, and continue to be kind to yourself and those around you. I’m sure it will be much appreciated through these challenging times and as we navigate the upcoming holiday season.

We extend best wishes of the holiday season to all Y retirees and their families!

So, What Now?

*by Hal Studholme, abbreviated contribution to **Tielines**, the newsletter of Y Retirees in Canada*

“What now?” regarding the future of our beloved YMCA when we get to the ‘post Covid’ era?

The question sometimes keeps me awake at night. I just can’t imagine a world without the Y .

It seems to me the only route to an answer is to examine why we’ve been around so long and had such success. While sport and physical activities went on in the gyms and pools, we were actively challenging the same young men for their



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Y Alumni of Canada *continued from page 6*

spiritual welfare and growth. The Association recognized the changing world after WWII, and women and girls and the family gradually were folded into the mix. The focus on 'young' broadened to range from preschoolers to seniors. The importance of spiritual development took on a more humanitarian focus as the Y evolved out of evangelization and into ethical concepts and social and personal responsibility as the core of 'Spirit.' Local Y's began to look beyond their walls and see the community as a global construct. Over the span of a century the YMCA was recreating itself to shape to the needs of the community.

. Unfortunately, we've lost local Y's and many continue to be challenged. Even when restrictions are lifted, many may not plan to return to our facility and either avoid fitness spaces or turn to other fitness facilities.

Look at the words and expressions we use about ourselves. Some of them have guided us for ages. DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE IN SPIRIT, MIND AND BODY. And I challenge you to ask yourself what do each of these terms mean for you today? WE BUILD STRONG KIDS, STRONG FAMILIES, and STRONG COMMUNITIES. .

The wonderful history and evolution of the YMCA is not a bricks and mortar story. It is a story of serving people in every way they need help to reach their potential in all ways. Let's take a moment to reflect on our impact. It gives me hope for the future of our organization.

Germany, CSI Volunteers

Albrecht Kaul provides Bridges' remarks from two members of the CSI board and notes that elections in the spring will enrich the board with two additional members.

Lenore Berger: One year ago, I was asked to join the CSI board. I gladly confirmed, since my husband and I have been members of CSI for several years and we feel very comfortable in this community

I am not a classical YMCA member. I did not grow up with YMCA youth groups, etc. I found my way into the YMCA during a holiday in the YMCA guesthouse Victoria at the island of Borkum. There I got to know the difference between traditional beliefs and personal relationship with Christ, and my husband followed a short time after.

Now it was a great concern for us that our five children



should also get to know Jesus. We looked for the fellowship of Christians during every vacation. Many holiday camps for the children or the whole family were under the direction of the YMCA. For me, the visits of the YMCA Ghana and China were particularly impressive.

Since there were almost no Christian activities for children in our city, we founded the YMCA Warendorf in 2005 with our now grown children and some friends. I lead the YMCA children's group and the Bible study group, but due to corona restrictions they are currently not allowed to take place. After my time as owner of a fashion store, I am now volunteering for fair trade in the world shop project in my town of Warendorf. In our YMCA there are only very few members of my generation; therefore I am glad to be able to contribute to the CSI.

Thomas Brendel, YMCA Volunteer, Goerlitz

In 1967, I was called to volunteer in a youth group in my hometown of Görlitz an der Neisse. This was the beginning of a binding collaboration in the Church of Jesus. Some years later I completed my training as a youth worker in Berlin, Dresden and Markersdorf near Görlitz.



This was followed by 14 years of work in the Hoyerswerda church district with 12 parishes. In the YMCA-Missio-Center Berlin, a training center for volunteers, I worked as a lecturer for 3 years. After that I had a half-time position as Senior YMCA Officer at the YMCA Regionalverband Schlesische Oberlausitz e.V. and another half-time position as the responsible director of studies in the office for church services in Berlin.

This sounds rather prosaic at first, but was exciting and thrilling from the first to the last hour and - hopefully - blessed. For three years now I am working as a volunteer again in various areas of the YMCA and the Lutheran Church. I see my main task in supporting the missionary work among young people and young adults through prayer, Bible studies, practical help and various services, including committee work.

The appointment as a worker for God's Kingdom is a lifelong calling. The conditions change in the course of life; the vocation remains for life. I want to accept the challenge to live this modestly and devoted. Therefore I ask to understand the will of Jesus, the chances of the YMCA work today, and my place in spreading the kingdom of God.

December 2020



BRIDGES

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Prior printing and distribution support for BRIDGES was provided by the Greater Philadelphia YMCA sending a message of "Brotherly Love" to YMCA retirees around the world.




BRIDGES IS FOR ALL WHO WISH TO RECEIVE IT

This edition of Bridges was distributed only electronically. If you have a retired Y colleague without Email, please provide the necessary information below and Email or mail the details to Ken White. WFYR has received only a few names of retirees lacking Email, and continues to explore options for postal deliveries.

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