

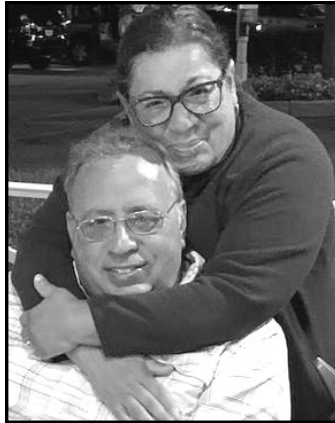
The Florida YMCA Retiree's Connection

# Sandpaper

Summer 2024 Volume 86 Issue 4



The mission of the YMCA Alumni is to enable members to promote a nurturing worldwide Christian fellowship that provides educational, social and charitable opportunities.



## Co-President's Message: Arlinda Quinones/Mike Santos

Hi fellow Willis Chapter members. We are writing this on Memorial Day, and would like to take a moment to remember the some 1.2 Million (or more) service members who gave their lives for our country since the American Revolutionary War. Michael is a Veteran and has nearly a dozen service members in his family; fortunately none of them died in action.

Since last, we attended a national meeting training conference entitled "48 Hours" in St Louis MO at the Drury Inn, Union Station. The hotel/inn is well over 100 years old and was originally a YMCA

building that housed thousands of railroad workers over the years. Most of the National Board was present, plus all of the Regional VPs as well as all of the chapter presidents or their representatives.

The meeting focused on changes and challenges that both the national association and our chapter face in this changing world. The two biggest challenges we face are recruiting and retaining members, and the ageing of our current members.

New member recruitment was down for three years running but went up slightly in 2023. It's still down from 2019. Some of this was the impact of Covid, but part is also attributed to new retiree disinterest in the Y Alumni, either from no knowledge of who we are and what we do, or a perception of us being "just a bunch of retired Y execs having lunches."

We need to inform prospective new members to remove the former as an obstacle and dispel the latter through better communication and engagement. We found out about a big retiree list from 2022 and when we get that list or an update, we plan, with your help, to reach out to everyone on it who is in Florida. We are going to get ideas from you, our current members, on what you like and do not like about how we are operating as a chapter and make necessary adjustments to better meet what you want to do. If we can clearly communicate who we are and what we do, we think we can generate some additional interest and new members, and then retain them.

As we age, we recognize that the increased congestion in Florida cities and the massive increased fuel & transportation costs over the past 3.5 years, all combine to make travelling across the state much less enjoyable, or even possible, for some.

We will try to have business meetings near where the majority of our members live and incorporate Zoom or something similar to allow members in distant areas to participate.

We will also like to start having members in distant areas to sponsor a luncheon in their areas. There would be no expense to the sponsor member (other than his or her lunch), just getting a place selected and getting members or prospective members to attend. We will both try to make it out to these lunches, and might even sponsor one down on the Gold Coast (Miami to West Palm area) when we are down there next.

Best wishes for a pleasant summer to all.

### C. B. Willis Chapter Officers

#### Co-Presidents

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#### Treasurer

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The Florida Sandpaper is the newsletter of the C. B. Willis Chapter of YMCA Alumni and is published six times a year.

#### Sandpaper Editor

**Phil Wortman**

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## C. B. Willis Chapter: Connect-Travel-Serve

# Columns

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## Following ...

William F. McDowell

If I knew of a better person than Jesus Christ, I would give him my full, perfect, and lifelong allegiance. Not knowing any better person, I will give my love, my obedience, my faith to Him.

If in all the domain of biography, if in all the wide range of human history, there were a better person, or if any had appeared that seemed worthier to follow, I would follow him.

If I knew a better ideal for personal life and a better means of reaching that ideal than the ideal of Jesus, I would make that ideal my own.

If I knew a better program for the world than that of Jesus, I would give my life to it.

I can not give my heart's consent to follow any second-rate person. I can only satisfy my own sense of what is best and highest and most ideal by following the best person there is.

## Direction

From "Words of Life"

Religion is the direction of the mind toward what is conceived to be the highest truth, or the will toward the highest duty, the chief thing to be done, and of the heart toward the highest beauty, to the most complete harmony and satisfaction.

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

*It is very important to maintain this column expressing the core Christian values of our organization's Mission Statement, and of the YMCA's founding purpose.*

*If you would like to assist in providing a message for this column, please contact me ... let's keep the "C" in YMCA Alumni.*

## Who Is Doing What?

Dorothy Markell—Correspondent



Straight out of the bravery department, **Ed Ellis** (who is not young) had his first soaring ride on a glider plane. More courage than I have, for sure.

**Don Macher** wrote to say that he and **Reile** traveled

for 15 days to Dubai and then the Seychelles to celebrate her birthday. It was a wonderful trip with many exciting excursions throughout the United Arab Emirates. They experienced a day in the desert with many fun activities and ended the day with cultural dances and a dinner at an oasis!

They got to tour Burj Khalifa and went to the 145th floor where they were up in the clouds looking over Dubai. They were exhausted after five busy days in the UAE so they traveled to the Seychelles for 8 days of relaxation on the beach. Don says he would recommend this trip to everyone. I say that was one heck of a birthday gift!

**Gene Dickie** wrote to say that George Williams college camp in Lake Geneva is being purchased by a developer! He doesn't know the details but it is soon. On a personal note Gene is going to Minnesota to see his three daughters in August and early September where he can see his grandchildren and great grandchildren. His youngest grandson will be on the high school football team again in the Fall and he has hopes to play football in college.

**Pat Frazier** wrote to say that she and her best friend will be taking a trip to Alaska in August. They fly into Fairbanks and take the train to Denali State park. They will also visit Kenai Fjords National Park. At home Pat is always busy either taking exercise classes or teaching them. She does classes for both skilled nursing patients as well as memory care patients. She enjoys helping others stay happy and healthy. (Note - Pat lives in Sunnyside Village, a lovely Mennonite Community open to all faiths).

I am writing this column at my daughters desk in West Hartford, CT while visiting family and really enjoying the flowering trees and bushes - so different from Florida....and cooler!

## Editorial: Cultivate

Phil Wortman—Sandpaper Editor and Stahl

When I was part of the South Field YMCA staff in the late 1970s, each Region Consultant had a personal relationship with most of the local Y career staff in their service area. As the individual would be nearing possible retirement, the consultant would share various helpful aspects, benefits and planning areas to assist them in their decision making.

One of the areas regularly discussed was the desire to maintain some sort of relationship with the Y and past Y friends and colleagues. Of course, during the discussion, membership in the IARD (International Association of Retired Directors\*) was always talked about as the best way to keep those connections. Membership was free and the upcoming retiree was encouraged to join as part of their future retirement activities.

In the 80s and 90s the YMCA Retirement Fund conducted two day retirement seminars for those beginning to seek retirement information. My wife, Gail, and I attended one of those ... it was extremely helpful for us. During the seminar a representative from NAFYR (North American Fellowship of YMCA Retirees\*) would make a presentation to the group encouraging them to keep connected after retirement and join the organization. Membership was a free benefit they could enjoy.

The relationship with the regional consultant and the awareness placed on the organization through the Fund's retirement seminars were particularly important in providing a personal contact with the upcoming retirees to share with them the opportunities to continue their Y friendships and Y connection on into retirement through becoming involved in the organization.

Just how much the above impacted membership is anyone's guess, but they were significant factors in informing those retiring of the organization. By 2009, Registered Membership was at an all time high ... reaching over 1,500 registered units with 21 chapters. The C. B. Willis Chapter had over 94 member units..

Change happens ... The YMCA Region structure and the YMCA Retirement Fund's retirement seminars were discontinued resulting in the loss of those valuable personal contacts to build awareness and respond to the changing socio-demographics with those entering the retirement age. Additionally,

(Please see "Editorial" page 3)

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# Membership

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## *Others sharing their personal stories related to Catholic participation and membership in the YMCA*

### **Bob Martin**

I read with interest your Y story about working with the Catholic youth in New Orleans.

When I worked at the Y in Jacksonville I asked my Priest from Resurrection Catholic Church Father Cody to be in charge of our summer day camp devotion activities. Father Cody actually baptized my youngest daughter, Codi who was named after him.

One of our Board members, Dan Porter, also invited his pastor from the local Christian Church to help. It worked wonderfully.

I am glad to see how you helped the Catholic kids be included and taking the extra initiative to accommodate and appreciate how important our faith is to us.

### **Ed Ellis**

Thank you for the "Sandpaper." Twice a month I am reminded of my meaningful career as a Y guy. "The Connection" and the "Sandpaper." And it's the "Sandpaper" that gives the reflections that satisfy.

I am amazed that with all the Y retirees we have in Florida that only 46 choose to identify, but hopefully they receive the same rewarding feelings when they get the "Sandpaper."

I don't get to many get-togethers, and I don't know many of the members but I always enjoy myself and more important, I learn new things.

My church history professor at SMU school of theology was the Methodist Church's official delegate to the Vatican Council II in 63/64.

I was a night desk clerk at White Rock Branch Y in Dallas while going to school. I did my Thesis on the relationship between the Y and the Catholic Church as a result of Vatican II.

Bishops throughout the USA saw the Y as a Protestant proselytizing evil animal. Blew me away. Thanks for sharing the personal experience.

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## Minutes: Planning Meeting 4/24

### **Dorothy Markell - Secretary**

A small group of Willis-ers met to plan future meetings and to discuss the status of our membership. We currently have 35 units (individuals or couples) as well as 11 double memberships (those with membership in two chapters). Membership is declining nationally as we are failing to attract new (younger) members to our fine group!

We approved **Don Macher** to be our treasurer since our previous treasurer moved out of state.

We agreed to hold our annual meeting October 8-9, 2024 in the St. Petersburg area. More details to follow.

**Dorothy Markell and Pat Frazier** will do a luncheon in January or February 2025 in Sarasota

### **John Preis**

Thanks very much for putting me on the list to receive the Sandpaper publication. I read your and Mr. Williams' historical accounts of the whole Catholic / YMCA thing with great interest.

I thought the editor's note was exceptionally poignant as objective history told by those who have actually been there is so important to the YMCA as it's inevitable that the organization we knew and loved will rapidly move on. I marvel with contemporaries that we were so unbelievably fortunate to work for the YMCA during its golden period.

That said however, I have to relate my interest in your and Mr. Williams' stories. In 1997, I was the CFO of the NYC Y and after 18 years as a Y professional, and looking to move up, I knew that to become a strong Y CEO required strong development skills which I definitely didn't possess.

Sadly, and with much personal angst, I concluded that advancement in the nonprofit finance world meant health care or higher education. As a native NYer, I took the position of Associate Dean - Finance and Admin for the Business School at Columbia University (basically the Business School's CFO).

After a couple of years, I was contacted to see if I wanted to interview to succeed the great Harold Smith at the YRF. I was happy to get the job and very happy to get back to the YMCA.

Shortly after being named to the position, I got a call from someone from a Y retiree organization publication (I can't recall the person or the publication) asking me with great seriousness how I felt that me, a Catholic, was succeeding such an important YMCA icon like Harold Smith. I honestly had no idea what he was talking about and said, "if it's cool with you and Mr. Smith, it's cool with me." I had no idea how this gentleman knew I was Catholic or why it mattered.

Anyway, after reading the historical Y/Catholic accounts I realize now, after all these years, that the caller was likely looking for a more considered response from me and that I should probably have been more eloquent. Hopefully it's never too late to pray a sincere act of contrition.

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## Editorial

(Continued from page 2)

national membership dues were implemented in 2009.

Today we are a declining organization with less than 900 registered member units and 17 chapters with several chapters having difficulty maintaining operation. The Willis Chapter registered membership has dropped to less than 50 member units. The organization has not responded in a proactive way to cultivate the emerging Y career retiree in a way that addresses the changing Y employee socio-demographics.

As membership is life, it is incumbent on the YMCA Alumni leadership to enact necessary policy changes and put its full human and financial resources into reversing the downward spiral through an aggressive awareness and solicitation marketing effort to obtain new membership.

\* EDITOR'S NOTE: *Over the years the YMCA retirement organization has experienced several name changes from Veterans International Secretarial Fellowship (1922), International Association of Retired Directors (1972), North American Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (1995), Association of YMCA Retirees (2009), and to YMCA Alumni Association (2017).*





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**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** If you are **not receiving chapter email alerts** and information about ZOOM meetings, we do not have your current or correct email address. Please email it to Phil Wortman at [wortmanii@aol.com](mailto:wortmanii@aol.com) so you won't be left out.

## Your YMCA Alumni Association

### YMCA Alumni Strategic Plan 2025-2028 Is Underway!

Submitted by Chuck Ainsworth Vice President, YMCA Alumni East Region

Under the leadership of President Phill Morgan, the Board and Chapter Presidents are engaged in developing the next three-year plan for YMCA Alumni. Initially the focus of the Planning Committee consisting of the current and past presidents and three regional vice presidents, was to refine and articulate vision and mission statements, an exercise that unites the Planning Committee's understanding and agreement on organizational purpose and priorities.

The group process through the first six months of 2024 enabled many opportunities through Zoom to reach agreement about the most important stakeholder groups and their questions, and to study data about our membership constituency. It also led to agreement about the actual strategic plan template and resolved differences of the most important and most strategic of our upcoming priorities.

Perhaps one of the most important planning events led by President Morgan and the committee occurred in the biennial meeting of YMCA Alumni recently convened in St. Louis, Mo. There the National Board and Chapter Presidents were engaged in table group discussions and topical presentations. It is fair to say that the resulting discussions had a double value: (a) determining the most important critical issues facing the chapters and their leadership; and, (b) helping to discern what of the collective needs might be priorities of the Strategic Plan.

Two discussion sessions lead by VP Chuck Ainsworth sought to understand the chapter capabilities and plans for leadership succession planning and the challenges of chapter geography in terms of involving more YMCA retirees. Table discussions determined that both matters require priority attention in the drafting of the Strategic Plan.

VP Dave Rogers continued table discussions focusing on the use of technology by the organization and its members and the prioritization of resources needed by the chapters. Overall, the presentations and discussions contributed significantly to the ability of the Planning Committee to focus on potential priorities for the Strategic Plan.

The next phase of the planning process was a two-day work session involving Phill Morgan and Chuck Ainsworth in which they considered not only the goal areas which the Planning Committee affirmed as priorities, but also evaluation of the specific objectives which the committee might review at its next meeting in June.

While it is possible that the work of the committee will result in a plan draft that could be approved by the Board in July, there is agreement that the most important aspect of the plan is the acceptance and buy-in by leaders and members of YMCA Alumni. Consequently, the process will seek the meaningful participation of YMCA Alumni's committed members.

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