

## **A Community Partnership**

Each November the Y hosts our annual Heritage Club Luncheon which brings together community leaders with past and present YMCA board leadership. It was a wonderful event with Brian Knochenmus providing a keynote addressing the YMCA's role as a community hub in the areas physical and mental health, economic development, and employee recruitment and retention. As the Y reaches 15 years in operation it is natural that some of the original community exhilaration has worn off. We lose sight that the Y is vibrant people and programs which positively influence so many each day; instead of a bricks and mortar shell.

I had the opportunity to mingle with some of the Ys original board members at the luncheon. People like Bob Aufenthie who was the board chair for many years and was instrumental in the vision and fundraising which brought a \$10 million dollar facility to Marshall. It was a major undertaking and somewhat controversial at the time. Hardly a week passes 15 years later where I am not told by someone that they were against the idea at the time but now visit every day and can't imagine what the community would be like without a Y. In small communities all across the country the local YMCA is usually that largest community project completed entirely through non-tax donations and every one was built on the backs of the volunteers and donors who did the heavy lifting.

In February we kick off our 2019 Annual Campaign. The 16<sup>th</sup> time we've come together to tackle the work which allows the Y to live its charitable mission to strengthen and serve the entire community. Our goal this year is the raise \$121,000 which is used to provide membership access to our friends and neighbors who are unable to afford the dollar amount which is required for the Y to remain financially sustainable. Scholarships are also provided to qualified individuals and families for core programming like Summer Day Camp and Afterschool at the Y which allow children to have a positive experience in a safe environment while parents work for our local businesses to support their families. Donations also support Swim Lessons. Drowning is the #2 cause of child mortality and nobody should live in the Land of 10,000 Lakes and not have basic swimming skills.

The mission hasn't changed and I invite you to consider being a part of our YMCA cause to strengthen the community. We need volunteers to help us campaign and accept tax-deductible donations of any size to meet the needs of our community. Contact me at the Y for more information.