



Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs

FALL STAFF RALLY 2025



PRESENTED BY:



2025 FALL STAFF RALLY



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Pav YMCA

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Greater Peoria Family YMCA

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Family & Youth Programming Director
Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois

IL STATE ALLIANCE OF YMCA'S STAFF:

GLENN HALEY

CEO

WENDY BONILLA

Director of Alliance Services
& Special Projects

WELCOME TO THE FALL STAFF RALLY!



Jamie Kucera

Executive Director/CEO,
Pav YMCA
Chair, 2025 Fall Rally Planning
Committee

Dear YMCA Leaders,

On behalf of the entire planning committee, it is my honor to welcome you to the 2025 Fall Staff Rally! I'm thrilled to join you for this exciting and inspiring event where we gather to connect, educate, and ignite the passions that drive our mission forward. This year's theme, "Game On! Connect, Educate, Inspire," captures the essence of what we do at the Y: we create spaces where people come together, learn, and grow. Just like the world of games, we unite in shared experiences that help us challenge ourselves, work as a team, and find joy in the journey. As we come together, we are not only sharpening our skills but also discovering new ways to overcome challenges, think creatively, and inspire each other to be our best selves.

The Y's mission has always been rooted in creating connections—and there's no better time than now to strengthen those bonds. Over the course of the next few days, you will have the opportunity to connect with colleagues who share your passion for the Y's work. You will dive into educational workshops, discover new tools to foster success, and be inspired to continue growing, not just as professionals but as leaders in the communities that you serve.

I want to take a moment to recognize the dedication each one of you brings to our work. You are the heart of the Y, and through your commitment, creativity, and tireless effort, we continue to create spaces where all people can thrive.

As we embrace the spirit of "Game On," let's challenge ourselves to think outside the box, to push beyond the expected, and to find innovative ways to make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Together, we are building a brighter future for our communities, one connection, one education, and one inspiration at a time.

Thank you for your commitment to the movement and for the incredible work you do every day. Let's make this Fall Staff Rally a moment to celebrate our journey and re-energize our spirit to continue to do great things across the state of Illinois!

Let the games begin!

Warm regards,
Jamie

SPONSORS, VENDORS & PARTNERS



Please join us in thanking our sponsors and vendors for their continued support and generosity. Be sure to stop by our vendor booths during the Rally to learn more about these fantastic companies and enter your raffle ticket for a chance to win a prize. **Vendor contact information can be found on pages 20 and 21.**

PRESENTING SPONSORS



ACTIVITY SPONSORS



LEGAT ARCHITECTS
Design with a Difference



RCXsports



VENDORS



InBody

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**HAMMER
STRENGTH**



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**SPEAR
CORPORATION**



PARTNERS



FALL STAFF RALLY SCHEDULE



PRE-CONFERENCE TRAINING

Wednesday, September 24

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Fundamentals of Fundraising

Location:

Bloomington-Normal Marriott
201 Broadway,
Normal, IL 61761
309- 862-9000

Registration:

See details on next page.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

8:30 am - 10:30 am	Registration + Vendor Tables Open
9:30 am - 10:20 am	Workshops Round I
10:20 am - 10:30 am	Transition Break + Vendor Time
10:30 am - 12:00 pm	Opening Session
	Chair Welcome
	The Power of Thinking, Feeling and Imagination - Lisa Behrends
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm - 1:15 pm	Transition Break + Vendor time
1:15 pm - 2:15 pm	Peer Community Group Time
2:15 pm - 2:30 pm	Transition Break + Vendor time
2:30 pm - 3:30 pm	Workshop Round II options
3:30 pm - 3:45 pm	Transition Break + Vendor time
3:45 pm - 4:45 pm	Workshop Round III options
4:45 pm - 6:00 pm	Transition Break/ Vendor Reception / Dinner
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm	Weathering the Storm: Lessons in Navigating Disaster for Any Y - Cory Harrison

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

7:30 am - 8:30 am	Breakfast
7:30 am - 9:15 am	CEO Breakfast
8:15 am - 9:15 am	How To's
9:15 am - 9:30 am	Break + Check Out
9:30 am - 11:30 am	Closing Session
	Social Impact of Intergenerational Leadership - Ben Major
11:30 am	Closing, Farewell

PRE-CONFERENCE TRAINING



The Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs, in partnership with YMCA of the USA and Northern Midwest Learning Center, is pleased to offer the following pre-conference training.

Fundamentals of Fundraising / Trainer

Wednesday, September 24th, 9am-5pm

Bloomington-Normal Marriott, 201 Broadway, Normal, IL 61761

Instructor: Carrie Collins, CRFE, Senior Director, Philanthropy Engagement, YMCA of the USA

Registration Fee: \$75 (\$25 for Trainer)

Registration Link: <https://lcdc.yexchange.org/s/c41v95t>

Expand your fundraising knowledge and help your Y more fully reach its philanthropic potential. This new, day-long course is focused on why fundraising is important to both the Y and continued professional development. Participants will learn about basic, contemporary fundraising strategies and become confident in telling the Y story for the purpose of inviting philanthropic support. The training has a focus on the donor-centered cycle of fundraising and its role in a strong development program. Designed to elevate fund development knowledge, this new training opportunity will help to build a foundation for a stronger philanthropic culture. This training is geared for Y staff members looking to grow their fundraising knowledge.

Leadership Competencies Developed

- Communication & Influence
- Critical Thinking & Decision Making
- Philanthropy
- Volunteerism
- Functional Expertise

HOTEL FLOOR PLAN



BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL MARRIOTT HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER

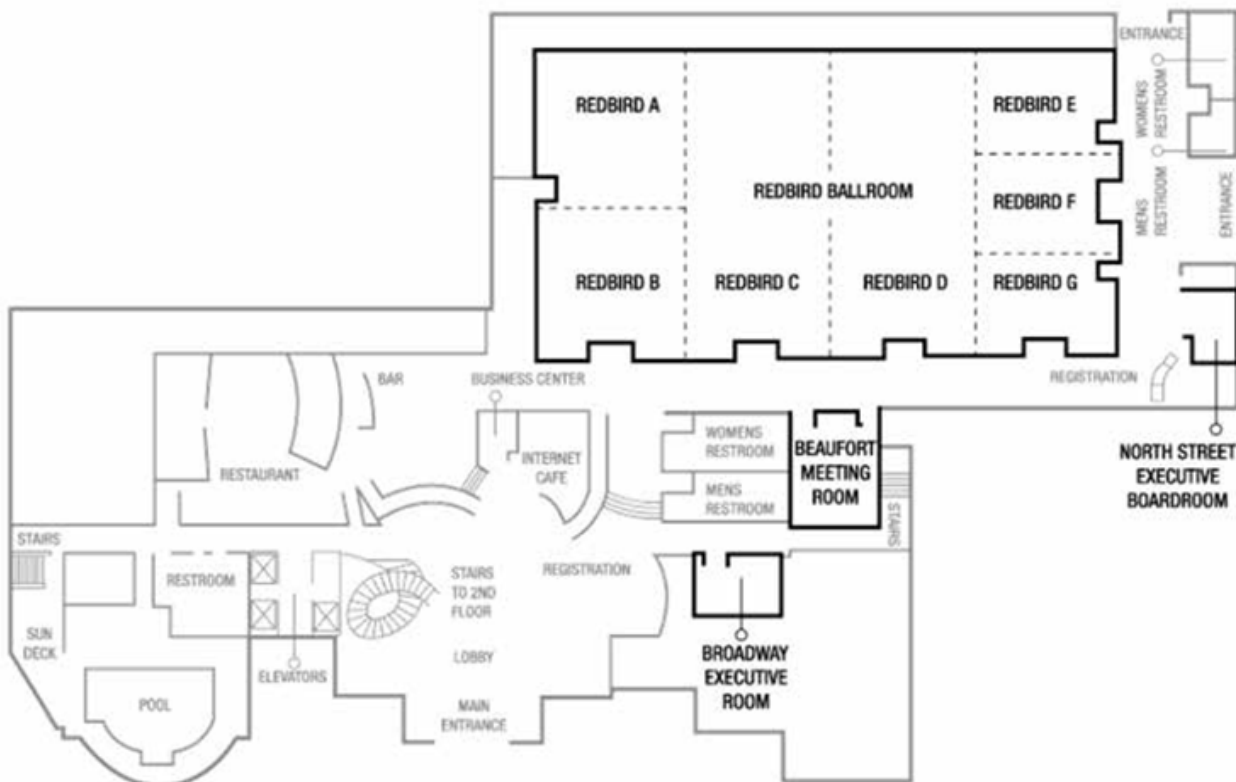
201 Broadway, Normal, IL 61761

Welcome to the newly remodeled hotel and conference center! **Check-in time is 3 p.m.** and **check-out is noon.** Guests will be permitted to check-in earlier or check-out later subject to room availability. Baggage will be stored at no charge for early arrivals and late departures.

SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



RALLY PERKS & PLUSES



ONE-ON-ONE RETIREMENT FUND CONSULTATIONS

Are you on-track for retirement? Book a one-on-one consultation with Matt Servedio, Manager of Education & Y Relations, Y Retirement Fund:

<https://go.oncehub.com/IllinoisFallRally>

VENDOR GIVEAWAYS!

Thanks to the generosity of our wonderful vendors, all Rally attendees will have the opportunity to win fantastic prizes. Rally attendees will receive 10 raffle tickets at registration, which can be deposited in the raffle bags at each vendor booth. We will be drawing the winning tickets during the Vendor Reception. Good luck!

FALL RALLY MEALS

All meals and breaks are included in the conference fee. Those requesting special dietary requirements for meals at the time of registration will be honored. Unfortunately, we will not be able to honor last minute requests.

FALL RALLY EVALUATION

As a conference participant, you will receive an email shortly after the conference that will direct you to an online conference survey. Thank you in advance for sharing your feedback with the planning committee.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON PEER COMMUNITIES:

Peer Communities connect professionals from across the state with similar job functions or projects. Members of each peer community will meet to network, brainstorm, troubleshoot and share successes and challenges. Although your work may involve multiple Peer Communities, we ask that you please select ONE to participate in during the Rally.

- Aquatics
- Early Childhood
- Employee Services (HR/Payroll)
- Executive Leadership
- Finance
- Fund Development
- Health & Wellness
- Membership & Marketing
- Out of School Time/Camp/Teens
- Property Management/Facilities
- Sports



GET SOCIAL!

Help us capture memories from this year's Rally by posting photos to Facebook, Instagram and X using these hashtags:

- #ILRally2025
- #BeCauseY
(get us on the 'Living Our Cause' feed)
- @illinoisymcas

GENERAL SESSION PRESENTATIONS



THE POWER OF THINKING, FEELING AND IMAGINATION

Lisa Behrends

The power of thinking, feeling, and imagination shapes not only our personal lives but also our workplace experiences. The way we think influences our problem-solving and decision-making, our emotions impact teamwork and leadership, and our imagination fuels innovation and growth. You have the power to create the career and work environment you desire by shifting your mindset and aligning your emotions and actions with your goals.

After attending this session, participants should be able to:

1. Recognize the connection between mindset and workplace outcomes
2. Apply techniques that fosters growth and strengthens decision-making skills
3. Learn to manage their emotions and use them to improve teamwork, leadership, and communication

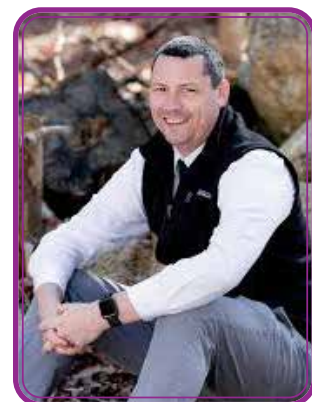
WEATHERING THE STORM: LESSONS IN NAVIGATING DISASTER FOR ANY Y

Cory Harrison, Vice President of Overnight Camping, YMCA of Greenville

In this candid and engaging session, Cory Harrison, Vice President of Overnight Camping for the YMCA of Greenville, draws from Camp Greenville's experience recovering from a devastating hurricane—and broadens the lens to include all types of disasters that can impact a YMCA. Whether facing a global pandemic like COVID-19, wildfires, severe weather events, a serious staff incident that draws media attention, or even a tragic drowning, this session covers the full spectrum of crisis scenarios.

Cory will share transparent insights into immediate crisis response, managing complex insurance and government processes, and leading long-term recovery and renewal efforts. Attendees at this keynote will gain valuable strategies for crisis management, clear and honest communication with stakeholders, and building resilient organizations that can sustain their mission no matter the disruption.

Through vivid storytelling, photos, and lessons learned, Cory will highlight what worked, what didn't, and what he would do differently in hindsight. This session is essential for YMCA leaders and staff across all program areas and regions who want to strengthen their emergency preparedness, protect their communities, and navigate the unpredictable with confidence.



SOCIAL IMPACT OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Benjamin Major, Vice President, Social Impact, Florida State Alliance of YMCAs

As we enter a future with increased generational diversity in economic and civic decision-making spaces, it is now more important than ever to understand the intergenerational system. Let's explore how each generation influences the way society navigates through a rapidly changing world.

WORKSHOPS



THURSDAY MORNING WORKSHOPS:

Streamline Your Group Communication

BAND, Kevin Cantillon, Partnerships & Growth Marketing

Organize everything, notify everyone – BAND is your all-in-one app for everything: messages, calendars, files, photos, videos, and more. and communicate with everyone Experience better communication with BAND! Join this session to learn how to experience better communication with the free BAND app.

Shaping the YMCA of Tomorrow:

Partnerships and Trends in Facility Design

Legat Architects, Jay Johnson and Ted Haug

Is there a new building or building remodel in your future? Join this session to learn about the latest trends and leading practices.

Play Like a Pro: Expanding Access to Youth Sports

RCX Sports, Jordan Woods, Growth Manager

RCX Sports is the official youth sports partner of the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, and MLS, operating league-branded programs like NFL FLAG, Jr. NBA Leagues, MLB Jr. Play Ball, NHL STREET, and MLS GO. We work with hundreds of YMCAs and Parks & Rec departments nationwide to make youth sports more accessible, inclusive, and fun. Our mission is to elevate the recreational experience—helping every kid play like a pro. Join us to explore how we can work together to make sports more accessible and increase youth sports participation in your communities.

AI Assistants for Human-Focused Work:

Amplifying the Mission, Not Replacing It

Traction Rec, John Winston

AI is showing up everywhere, we know it's no longer just a buzzword, and it's becoming part of our everyday lives! So the real question is: how do we ride this wave without losing the human touch and heart? In this interactive session, we'll explore how YMCAs are already using AI to tackle real-world challenges, make operations and program development smarter and faster, and free up time for your team.

Even more, we'll peek into the deeper possibilities of AI, where it's fully integrated into your organization and works alongside you as a true teammate. Picture it like your favourite colleague who's been with the Y from day one, knowing every member and donor, pulling reports in a few clicks, and supporting you with more time and energy to building relationships and driving mission impact. Join the conversation with your ideas, insights, and experiences, and open the door to what AI could look like in your Y.

The Member Experience – Understanding the Importance of Design, Facility Layout, & Aesthetics

Torque Fitness, Tom McCarthy

Healthy Living undoubtedly drives much of the revenue Ys bring in on an annual basis. From memberships to program participation to PT and small group training, providing members and prospective members with a representative “fitness center” in today's ultra-competitive wellness industry is paramount for Ys to maintain and grow membership.

While the equipment, programs, and overall Healthy Living offerings must obviously be a focal point, understanding the importance of design, laying out the facility – both where “things” go and how they go – and the overall aesthetics of a building are of equal importance and often don't get the attention they deserve.

We look forward to a completely collaborative discussion on the importance of checking all the boxes when it comes to equipment/programming, facility design/layout, and aesthetics (flooring/turf, wall materials/colors, storage, etc.)

Making Sense of Your Daxko Data

Jeff Moran, Daxko

This session was shaped by input from your peers—YMCA leaders who want to better understand the reporting tools already at their fingertips. We'll walk through practical ways to use Daxko reports to stay informed, track what's changing, and support better decisions across your team. Whether you're new to reporting or just want a clearer view of what's possible, this session will help you make sense of the numbers—without getting lost in them.

Making the Most of Y Retirement Benefits

Matt Servedio, Manager of Education and Y Relations, Y Retirement Fund

This presentation will highlight the unique retirement benefit that your Y provides – the YCMA Retirement Fund! We will explore the differences between the Y Retirement's two Plans– the 401(a) Retirement Plan and the 403(b) Savings Plans (including the Tax-Deferred Account, Roth Account and Rollovers) – and how you as a Y employee can achieve lifetime income in retirement just by saving with the Y Retirement.

WORKSHOPS



THURSDAY AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

Adaptive/Inclusive Programming

Alyssa Anderson, Larkyn's Place Director and Jeff Scott, CEO, Stephens Family YMCA

In 2012, an idea was born– to create an innovative and universally designed YMCA that was a place for the WHOLE family– specifically, for parents and families of children with disabilities. This presentation will take you through conception, design, construction thoughts, budgeting ideas, and programming design for creating a disability inclusive YMCA. Both presenters will be available to assist in problem solving strategies for YMCA's just starting their disability inclusion, to those doing disability inclusion well.

Building a Culture of Philanthropy

Carrie Collins, CRFE, Senior Director, Philanthropy Engagement, YUSA

At every level, creating a culture of philanthropy is critical for growth of your Y and support of your programs. But culture isn't a checklist item. It has to be nurtured through every intentional interaction. Learn how developing a strong culture of philanthropy begins with you and how relationship building, education, engagement, and stewardship can easily become part of your daily work.

Child Protection (Praesidium) Accreditation – You can do this!

Join a panel of representatives from Illinois YMCAs – big and small – who have achieved accreditation. Facilitated by Andy Thornton, the Alliance's Champion for Child Protection, we will discuss the steps that led to success, address challenges faced along the way, and open the floor to any questions you may have. Child Protection is a membership standard that must be achieved by 2029. Together, we can make it happen.

Integrating Next Gen Donors into Your Annual Giving Campaign

Michelle Gorham, MPH, CFRE, Senior Consultant, DBD Group

Between the great wealth transfer and expanded platforms available for giving, new generation donors are changing the face of fundraising. While it would be easier for us to say, "Back in my day..." now is the right time to adjust our thinking and both our communication methods and content, to welcome Next Gen donors into our Ys and our annual giving plans -- paving the way to successful fundraising and fulfilled donors. Let's talk about what you can do to fill your pipeline with savvy, engaged donors who are looking for opportunities to give with purpose.

Intentional Professional Development for You and Your Staff

Laila Kim, Associate Executive Director of Member Experience, YMCA of Springfield

This hands-on How To Session will give you the tools to become more intentional and better equipped when advocating upwards (to your supervisor and everyone above you) and laterally/downwards (to your peers and reports). You will be inspired to lead by example and you will be able to pin-point in what area you or your staff needs coaching so you can reach your goal as a team.

It's Time to Get a Handle on Your Time

Jamie Kucera, Chief Operations Officer and Raj Waller, Senior Program Director, Pav YMCA

Jamie Kucera, Chief Operations Officer and Raj Waller, Senior Program Director, Pav YMCA

Time management is the ability to plan, prioritize, and organize tasks and responsibilities in a way that maximizes efficiency and productivity. Effective time management involves setting clear goals, breaking work into manageable steps, minimizing distractions, and making intentional decisions about how time is spent. It also includes the ability to meet deadlines, adapt to shifting priorities, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Mastering time management helps individuals and teams reduce stress, improve focus, and achieve more consistent results—both personally and professionally. This interactive workshop will offer tips and tricks to overcome the challenges that you may face with time management and offer a new perspective in tackling daily work (and home) responsibilities.

Mental Health Community Care

Elli Grapp, Regional Training Director, Northern Midwest Learning Center

Mental health is how we think, feel, and act. We all have mental health! This session will introduce the Mental Health Community Care framework, a preventive model of care that equips and empowers all individuals with the ability to provide informal, community-based mental health support.

WORKSHOPS



Real Talk: Navigating Difficult Conversations with Kids, Parents, and Staff

Cory Harrison, Vice President of Overnight Camping, YMCA of Greenville

Difficult conversations are inevitable in any YMCA environment—whether it's addressing challenging behavior with a camper, managing expectations with members, or confronting performance issues with staff. This session cuts through the noise and offers straightforward, actionable strategies to approach these conversations with confidence, clarity, and respect. Walk away with practical tools and mindset shifts that will empower you to handle difficult conversations head-on—so you can lead with integrity and keep your YMCA community strong and connected.

SEL: Leading Thru the Lens of the Child

Tori Dutkiewicz, Before and After School Care Director, Greater Joliet Area YMCA

The goal for this workshop is to teach fellow childcare staff new tools to better accommodate children in our programs with special needs/accommodations. I will provide tangible tools for the participants to take with them, we will do a whole group activity to help use the tools taught, and they will be provided with something to take with them to help keep them on track when they get back to their sites.

Sponsorship Playbook: Winning Strategies for Local Support

Logan Wilson, Sr. Director of Marketing & Communications, and Dani Freeman, Director of Community Relations & Events, Bloomington-Normal YMCA

Discover how to rally local businesses to support your YMCA events and programs. This session will walk you through practical strategies for identifying potential sponsors, crafting compelling sponsorship packages, and building lasting community partnerships. Whether you're just getting started or looking to level up your current approach, you'll leave with actionable tools to help your team score big with local support.

Staying Centered When Work Life Gets Messy

Rhiannon Yandel, Healthy Living Director, YMCA of Rock River Valley

At the YMCA, we wear many hats, juggling tasks and serving our community in a fast-paced environment. But in the midst of the busyness, it's easy to lose touch with our own center. This workshop is designed to help you find mindful moments that keep you grounded when work life feels chaotic. We'll explore simple, effective techniques to manage stress, stay present, and create calm in the midst of your busy day. From breathing exercises to quick grounding practices, this session will equip you with the tools you need to stay centered, focused, and ready to serve with purpose. Whether you're working with members, leading your team, or managing behind-the-scenes tasks, you'll leave with practical strategies to nurture your own well-being while staying engaged in your work.

The Future of Membership

Joe Kovalcheck, Director – Strategy & Quality Practices – Membership, YMCA of the USA

As the YMCA approaches its 175th anniversary in America, it faces a pivotal question: What does it truly mean to be a member? This session explores how the Y can move beyond transactional models and reimagine membership as a transformational connection to purpose, community, and belonging. Through a blend of history, strategy, and innovation, we'll examine how YMCAs can redefine membership to reflect the full breadth of our mission—spiritual, mental, and physical health—and build a sustainable, welcoming model that meets the evolving needs of our communities.

We Can't Talk About That at Work!

Building Brave Spaces for Dialogue Across Differences

Megan Vazquez, Senior Director, North Suburban YMCA

Conversations about race, religion, and politics are often avoided in the workplace — and for good reason. But silence can lead to deeper divisions, unmet needs, and disengagement. Inspired by Mary-Frances Winters' book *We Can't Talk About That at Work!*, this interactive workshop explores what it takes to foster brave spaces where authentic dialogue across difference can occur — respectfully, intentionally, and productively.

Participants will learn how to:

- Differentiate between safe and brave spaces
- Apply the IDEA (Invite, Dialogue, Engage, Act) model for structured conversations
- Understand their own cultural lenses and communication styles

continued on next page

WORKSHOPS



- Create workplace conditions that support belonging and mutual respect

This session is grounded in practical strategies and real-world application, tailored for those looking to build inclusive, emotionally intelligent, and justice-centered teams.

Welcome to the Mission:

Onboard with Purpose, Keep Them with Culture

**Debbie Gaughan, Vice President of Human Resources,
Edwardsville YMCA**

What if onboarding wasn't just about paperwork, but about belonging? As staff retention becomes an urgent challenge across the YMCA movement, this session invites a shift in how we think about hiring, onboarding, and the role of HR. We'll explore how culture begins before day one, in job postings, interviews, and the first conversations, and how the first 30 days shape the employee experience. With a focus on trust, recognition, equity, and feedback, this workshop offers space to rethink how we welcome and keep great people in mission-driven work.

Yearly Event Management

**Dani Freeman, Director of Community Relations & Events,
Bloomington-Normal YMCA**

Learn about yearly event management and how to make the most out of your events while doing less work on the day of! We will also be discussing sponsorships & opportunities for community partnerships!

YMCA World Service: How to Become Globally Engaged at the Y

**Mary Tikalsky, Director and Han Lee, Manager, World Service
Global Relations & Community Engagement, YMCA of the USA**

Take your YMCA career to the next level as you learn what it means to become a global leader at the YMCA and an ambassador of YMCA World Service. Understand the history and depth of the YMCA's global movement throughout its 180+ year legacy, how YMCAs today are working towards Vision 2030, a common global strategy that puts young people at the center, and how you can make a difference in your communities at the Y.

HOW-TO SESSIONS



FRIDAY MORNING “HOW-TO” SESSIONS

Grant Writing: Because Bake Sales Aren't Cutting It

**Cassie DeGuido, Senior Director of Program Development,
Bloomington–Normal YMCA**

Tired of scrambling for funds? This session will teach you how to find and evaluate the right grants, write strong proposals that fit your programmatic needs, and keep your reporting in check once the money comes in. You'll walk away with practical tools, writing tips, and real-world resources — all way more effective (and less sticky) than another bake sale.

Harnessing AI & Technology to Elevate Your Role

**David Beasley, Executive Director of Member Experience,
Edwardsville YMCA**

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, technology isn't just a tool — it's a powerful partner in enhancing our daily work and strategic impact. This interactive workshop, led by David Beasley, is designed for all staff members eager to explore how Artificial Intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies can revolutionize their roles at the YMCA. We'll move beyond the buzzwords and dive into practical, actionable ways to integrate AI-powered tools and modern digital practices into your workflow. Discover how to streamline administrative tasks, generate creative content, analyze data more effectively, and connect with members in innovative ways. This session will provide clear examples, hands-on demonstrations, and a collaborative environment to share ideas on how these advancements can enhance your efficiency, decision-making, and overall contribution to our mission of strengthening community. Get ready to embrace the future of work and empower yourself with the digital skills that will not only simplify your tasks but also amplify your impact!

How to Find your People and Connect with the Movement

**Elli Grapp, Regional Training Director,
Northern Midwest Learning Center**

Bring your laptop (optional) and join this session with Regional Training Director, Elli Grapp, to learn more about where and how to connect with leaders across the YMCA Movement. We will spend some time getting to know each other as well as the systems and opportunities that enable you to keep meeting and connecting beyond the IL Fall Rally.

Lane Lines & Launch Plans: Starting Your Y's First Swim Team

**Joel Segovia, Regional Aquatics Director,
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago**

This session will walk you through the essential steps to launch a successful YMCA swim team; from staffing and scheduling to building team culture and navigating meet logistics. Whether you're working with a single lane or a full pool, you'll leave with practical tools, tips and a clear path to make waves at your Y.

Level Up Your Designs with Canva

**Logan Wilson, Sr. Director of Marketing & Communications,
Bloomington–Normal YMCA**

Canva is the ideal design tool for YMCA staff who wear many hats and need to create eye-catching, on-brand content fast. Whether you're designing a flyer for swim lessons, a social media post for summer camp, or signage for your lobby, Canva makes it easy with intuitive tools, customizable templates, and game-changing features.

Owning Your Leadership

**Patrick Mainieri, Chief Operating Officer,
Bloomington–Normal YMCA**

Do you question if you are a leader? How do you view the difference between leadership and management? Where are areas of your daily life and work that you need stronger leadership? This session will be a fast and furious review of your personal leadership thoughts and how those viewpoints impact your leadership of self and others.

The Future of Facilities: Key Trends & Innovations

**Basil Fitzsimons, VP Real Estate and Facilities,
YMCA of Metro Chicago**

Predictive maintenance, net-zero buildings, optimal space utilization, modular design and mixed-use developments.

FALL RALLY AWARDS



These awards were established to recognize outstanding performances by volunteers and staff in Illinois. Staff and volunteers who receive these awards have exemplified exceptional levels of work performance and displayed high regard and loyalty to the YMCA's mission and work in their communities. Annually, an awards committee determines the recipient in each category.

STORMY WEBSTER AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING AQUATIC DIRECTOR

Stormy Webster began as a volunteer at the B.R. Ryall YMCA in 1952 teaching swimming and lifesaving at rented facilities as the Y did not have its own building. During her 38 years of commitment to the Y as a volunteer and staff member, Stormy was dedicated to providing training and staff development to improve the quality and safety of aquatics programming for youth in Illinois and Indiana. She was a master in working with volunteers. Under her leadership Stormy recruited more than 100 aquatic volunteers that taught more than 1,500 hours per week. Some of her accolades included Volunteer of the Year at the Ryall Y, SCUBA Commissioner for the Midwest Field and the Midwest Field Physical Director of the year in 1978. Stormy retired from the YMCA in 1990 as the Program Executive of the B.R. Ryall YMCA.

The Stormy Webster award recognizes a Y Aquatics Director who displays exceptional leadership, commitment and the attributes of being a cause driven leader in aquatics at a local, neighborhood or alliance level and is employed by a YMCA in the Illinois Alliance.

Stormy Webster Award for Outstanding Aquatics Director Recipients:

2024	Cindy Moss	2011	Julie Potocki	2000	Anne-Marie Buhrmester	1989	Nancy Reece
2023	Arthur Steiner	2010	Elaine Buckley	1999	Colleen Dempsey	1988	Pam Wagner
2022	Missy Contri	2009	Valarie Cahill	1998	Anita Perrotti	1987	Jeanette Bylwerk
2020	Caitlin (Catie) N. Wallis	2007	Joy Thomen	1997	Cheryl Dollinger	1986	Kathi Cook
2019	Deb Mortonson	2006	Lori Siegel	1996	Teresa Hill	1985	Mike Boyer
2018	Lynnae Touchette	2005	Karen Scott	1995	Pat Burns	1984	Jeff Campbell
2017	Jenny Rogel	2004	Mary Lou Pease	1994	Sandy Krol	1983	Karen Bruchan
2016	Danielle Krohn	2003	Kathryn L. Borgmann	1993	Kristi Umsted	1982	Vicky Blough
2015	Lesley Webster	2002	Chris Bertana	1992	Lynn Mikovich	1981	Jeff Ottaviano
2014	Sarah Jones	2001	Kathy Dueball	1991	Jill Steiner	1980	Mike Cook
2012	Jen Foley			1990	Paddy Harrington	1979	Stormy Webster

FALL RALLY AWARDS



MATT OTTAVIANO OUTSTANDING PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

Matt Ottaviano served as the Executive Director of the Lawson YMCA in Chicago before becoming Vice President of Operations at the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago. During this time Matt also led many MRC services. He exemplified the characteristics of a cause driven leader. He was honest, fair, intelligent, and friendly. His philanthropic spirit and dedication to the movement allowed him to relate to major donors, staff, as well as connect to the everyday Y member.

The Matt Ottaviano award recognizes a program director who displays exceptional leadership, commitment and the attributes of being a cause driven leader in program areas such as resident camp, day camp, child care, arts and humanities, youth services, youth sports, gymnastics, and teen programming. Peer Communities: Overnight (Resident) Camp, Day Camp, Teen, Before and After School, Early Learning

Matt Ottaviano Outstanding Program Director Award Recipients:

2024	Alex Totura - Program	2016	Derek Schlager	2005	Sue DeTaeye	1994	Scott Clark
	Paige Thompson-Childcare	2015	Lisa Parfitt	2004	Mary Pedersen	1993	Erika Barton-Wood
		2014	Allison Greenman	2003	G. Dianne Williams	1992	Judy Bucci
2023	Megan Edwards-Program	2013	Sarita Smith	2002	Rona Roffey	1992	Kim Stout
	Guylene Strange-Childcare	2012	Cory Harrison	2001	Jann Martin	1991	Terry Feldt
		2011	Melissa Ryan	2000	Maureen McCarthy	1990	D'Ann Lagerblade
2022	Rona Rafferty	2010	Katrina Luetkebuenger	1999	Kimberly George	1989	Judy Ellertson
2019	Rob Busby	2009	Susan Chansey	1998	Kathy Holland	1988	David Lee
2018	Julie Kapsch	2007	Amy Johnson	1997	Claudia Lesser	1987	Jill Kawulok
2017	Lisa McCully	2007	Shannon Payton	1996	Scott Peterson	1986	Nancy Battersby
		2006	Debbie Bruce	1995	Jacki Steffen	1985	Shirley Spears

JOSEPH ROKNICH AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING FITNESS-WELLNESS DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

Joseph Roknich was Executive Director at the Irving Park YMCA before becoming the Vice President of Operations for YMCA of Chicago and MRC Director. The Joseph Roknich award recognizes a Y staff person who displays exceptional leadership, commitment and the attributes of being a cause driven leader in the area of health, fitness/wellness. Peer Communities: Health and Wellness

Joseph Roknich Award for Outstanding Fitness/Wellness Director Recipients:

2024	Eddie Edwards	2000	Don Quinlan	1982	Doug Kohl	1963	Bruce Bromley
2023	Jennifer Buckwalter	1999	Kim Webb	1981	Wray Howard	1962	J. Larry Meyer
2022	Emily Hayden	1998	Kimberly Stewart	1980	Jean Thigpen	1961	G. Mike Chianakas
2020	Kristen Derengowski	1997	Tim McCoy	1979	Rich Escutia	1960	Gordon Peterson
2019	Breanne Anderson	1996	Peg Paligraf	1978	Stormy Webster	1959	Art Holland
2018	Angela Foulke	1995	Monica Kaminski	1977	Art Michaely	1958	Earl Wilson
2017	Ian Stewart	1994	Tony White	1976	Marlow B. Garvin	1957	Merton Kennedy
2014	Chelsey Bowermaster	1993	Diana Last	1975	Joni Coe	1956	Joe Roknich
2012	Kim Jass Ramirez	1992	Vicki Lettow	1974	Dave Diehr	1955	Jerry Martins
2010	Amy Kanzler	1991	Gretchen Kelly	1973	Cliff Lothery	1954	Bill Bartley
2009	Gretchen Isaac	1990	Robin Cagle	1972	Nicki Doehler		
2007	Scott Earl	1989	Liz Heller	1970	Yvonne Rish		
2006	Sue Munz	1988	Doug Thornton	1969	Bob Day		
2005	Cheryl Green	1987	Linda Dean	1968	Bob Turner		
2004	Eddie Papis	1986	Jim Rowland	1967	Jerry Woolley		
2003	Pam Gall	1985	Mike Parks	1966	Helen Coryell		
2002	Connie Laidlaw	1984	Dottie Bonnenfant	1965	Walt Brantley		
2001	Sandi Philippin	1983	Frank Klipsch	1964	Chuck Donecko		

FALL RALLY AWARDS



OUTSTANDING MEMBERSHIP-MARKETING DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

The Outstanding Membership/Marketing Director Award recognizes the Membership or Marketing Director who is committed to the member experience, displays leadership, creativity and exceptional customer service. Peer Communities: Membership, Marketing

Outstanding Membership/Marketing Director Award Recipients:

2024	Ben Engle	2017	Ashlee Heady	2011	Beth Reusch	2004	Michele Chandler
2023	Alex Geisler	2016	Michelle Polivka	2010	Jean Flider	2003	Jan M. Jann
2022	Lexie Zebe	2015	Margaret Willet	2009	Teresa Hoshauer	2002	Rich Haas
2020	Heather Dunker	2014	Margie Hennig	2007	Wendy Bonilla		
2019	Hannah Robinson	2013	Alicia Whitworth	2006	Elizabeth Davin		
2018	Abby Helm	2012	Keri Olson	2005	Marcia Green		

OUTSTANDING FACILITIES, BUILDING, AND/OR PROPERTIES DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

The Outstanding Facilities Director of the Year Award recognizes a full-time Facility Director in the Y movement for outstanding efforts in managing and maintaining a YMCA facility or facilities. Peer Communities: Property Management

Outstanding Facilities, Building and/or Properties Director of the Year Award Recipients:

2024	John Shea	2017	Tom Verheyen	2013	Don Stolz
2022	Manar Nuaimi	2016	Jeremy Nelson	2012	Dave Wassenhove
2019	Jim Trainor	2015	Greg Smith	2011	Walter Myers
2018	Joe Newingham	2014	Gary Weirather	2010	Ralph Alvarez

OUTSTANDING SUPPORT SERVICES OR ADMIN OF THE YEAR

The Outstanding Admin Award recognizes an administrative or support staff in the YMCA movement who provides exemplary service to his/her YMCA operation or department and is dedicated team member that has demonstrated the core values of the YMCA movement. Peer Communities: Finance, Employee Services

Outstanding Support Services or Admin of the Year Award Recipients:

2024	Kayla Carter	2020	Leslee Schueneman	2017	Tom DuBois	2012	Julie Easton
2023	Argelia Gonzalez	2019	Nicole Propst	2015	Nancy Witt	2011	Sue Jackson
2022	Ellen Corbin	2018	Jane Bowers	2014	Charlie Irick	2010	Amy Robbins

TOM STOLL AWARD

Tom Stoll, who passed away May 1, 2003, spent nearly 40 years in a love affair with the Y. Beginning in 1953 as a part-time volunteer at Oak Park Y Camp Douglas, Tom touched the lives of staff, volunteers, and members with the Oak Park, Aurora, Streator, and Naperville Ys. Tom was well known and respected for both the volunteer and staff leadership that he attracted and nurtured in the movement. As CEO of both the Streator and Naperville Ys, he built boards that were able to take good Ys and make them great. Tom recognized the importance of developing staff outside of his Y through active participation in both APD – now YPN – and as an instructor at Waubensee Valley Community College and George Williams College.

In recognition of Tom Stoll's Y legacy, the Tom Stoll Award has been established as an annual recognition presented to a Y professional on the ascending edge of service and who has developed outstanding executive or operational leadership and loyalty. Peer Communities: Operations, Executive Leadership

Tom Stoll Award Recipients:

2024	Kristen Lay	2018	Kathy Fielding
2022	Allison Greenman		

FALL RALLY AWARDS



DIG AWARD

The DIG Award recognizes a leader in the movement whose efforts focus on outreach to diverse and under-served communities and driving program innovation so that everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from, has an opportunity to reach their full potential. This leader is intentional on integrating inclusion strategies across the diversity wheel. Peer Communities: Diversity, Inclusion, & Global Initiatives

DIG Award Recipients:

2020	Daisy Moran	2019	Lynsey Wehrenberg	2018	Agneis Koenitz-Hudac
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LEADERSHIP LEGACY AWARD

The Leadership Legacy Award recognizes a current Chief Executive Officer that provides extraordinary leadership to a corporate YMCA in Illinois by exemplifying the YMCA's values and mission. This award recognizes cause-driven leaders in their association, community, and the Y movement and among his or her peers across the State.

Leadership Legacy Award Recipients:

2024	Chris Weittenhiller	2017	B.J. Wilken	2011	John Lee Usmial	1999	Martha Rolf
2023	Angie Sowle	2016	Sam Brooks	2010	Don Darnell	1998	Don Heller
2020	Mike Wennekamp	2015	Mark Spiegelhoff	2006	Judy Ellertson	1997	Larry Elliott
2019	Gary Bublit & Howard Schultz	2014	Dan Chonowski	2004	Jon Robinson	1996	Dan Osterman
2018	Deborah Allen	2013	Andy Thornton	2002	Dennis Mohrman		
		2012	Rob Wilkinson	2000	Wray Howard		

ALLIANCE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Alliance Rookie Award recognizes a "rookie" (6-24 months of employment) in the YMCA movement for outstanding on the job achievements and for demonstrating the ability to operate and manage successful programs, membership management or fundraising efforts in the YMCA through exceptional leadership.

Alliance Rookie of the Year Award Recipients:

2024	Zebulan Zillion	2015	Clayton Lott	2009	Susan Krause	2002	Melanie Brown
2023	Lou Bart	2014	Melissa Bryant	2009	Brad Cripe	2001	B.J. Wilken
2022	Keesiya Robertson	2013	Lesley Feyerherm	2007	Kristi Brewer	2000	Jan Schacht
2020	Rachel Latham	2012	Cody Duffie	2006	Joel Sieplinga	1999	Lori Oaks
2019	Sarah Tunall	2011	Lance Moring	2005	Joe Rodts	1998	Sarah McFarlane
2018	Sarah Weyer	2011	Johana Voss	2005	Jamie Eager	1997	Christopher Seals
2017	Lynn Eck	2010	Cari Christoff	2004	Susie Engle	1996	Colleen Dempsey
2016	Samuel Phillips	2010	David Zielinski	2003	JoAnn Webster		

FALL RALLY AWARDS



ALLIANCE COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD (STAFF AND/OR VOLUNTEER) OF THE YEAR

The Community Impact Award recognizes staff or volunteers who have made extraordinary contributions to the Y in their community and/or through the State Alliance. At the heart of every YMCA there are select staff and volunteers who give incredible amounts of time and energy to advance the Y's cause.

Alliance Community Impact Award Staff and/or Volunteer Recipients:

2024	Carmen Ruh	2007	Benno Friedrich	1995	Karma Niemeyer	1983	Evelyn Schum
2023	Kelsey Barnick	2006	Pete Franciskovich	1994	The McCartys	1982	Art Swanson
2022	Dori Fugate	2005	Alice Doyle	1993	Gary King	1981	Carol Argires
2020	Eric Hanson	2004	Mark Woods	1992	Russell Hartigan	1980	Rich Mueller
2019	Mike Broski	2003	Ray Kimbell	1991	Lee Anderson	1979	Ed Warren
2018	Gary Evans	2002	Dick Larson	1990	Jack Greenberg	1978	Kent Arney
2016	Cheryl Settle	2001	John Asan	1989	Bill Brock	1977	Ernie McKinnon
2015	Bill Gavin	2000	Allan Adducci	1988	David Hajek	1976	Jean P. Kaine
2012	Tim Johnson	1999	George Kolovos	1987	Lew Maulter	1975	Charles Matheny
2011	Rick Penn	1998	Mary Winters	1986	Robert Talitsch	1974	Helen Johnson
2010	Angie Scraedle	1997	Marge Kielgznski	1985	Ray Newman	1973	Elmer Geissler
2009	Rita Trent	1996	Roy Olson	1984	Max Zollner		

PROGRAM EXCELLENCE AWARD

The Program Excellence Award celebrates Y programs that are innovative and making a difference in communities across the state of Illinois.

Program Excellence Award Recipients:

2024

Memory Keeper's Chorus - Decatur Family YMCA
Emerging Leaders - YMCA of Rock River Valley

2023

Cafe Voca - North Suburban YMCA
Y on the Fly - Stephens Family YMCA
Y Winners - Two Rivers YMCA

2022

Illinois YMCA Youth and Government
Saturday Strikers - YMCA of Springfield
JOYNT Program - YMCA of the Rock River Valley

2019

Nourish - Two Rivers YMCA
The Matthew Project - YMCA of Springfield
2 Seconds 2 Long - North Suburban YMCA

2018

Camp Power - Kishwaukee Family YMCA
Special Olympics Swim Team - North Suburban YMCA
Go Blue - Water Safety - C.W. Avery YMCA
Kids Marathon - Sage YMCA

FALL RALLY AWARDS



ALLIANCE IMPACT PARTNER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This NEW award recognizes a community or statewide partner who has supported your YMCA or Alliance over the past year by engaging as a meaningful partner in a program, an initiative or advocacy.

Alliance Partner Award Recipients:

2024 Illinois Bone & Joint Institute

2023 Kiwanis Club of Joliet

2022 Plainfield School District, C.W. Avery Family YMCA

YPN PEER COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

The YPN Peer Community Leadership Award recognizes an active prime Chapter 45 YPN member that has displayed outstanding achievements leading their peer community by taking a proactive approach in bringing people together from across the state to share best practices in their area of focus.

YPN Peer Community Leadership Award Recipients:

2019 Kaia Dutler

2018 Jill Steiner

YPN LEADER OF THE YEAR (FORMERLY AYP OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP AWARD)

The AYP Outstanding Leadership Award recognizes an active Prime Chapter 45 YPN member for effective leadership. The outstanding leader is a champion of the YPN mission and focused on professional development, leadership development, networking, and innovation.

YPN Leader of the Year / AYP Outstanding Leadership Award Recipients:

2020 Lisa Behounek

2019 Jill Doerner

2018 Darin Williams

2017 Carolyn Hamilton

2016 Kaleena Escallier

2015 Cory Harrison

2014 Katrina Luetkebuenger

2013 R.J. Bartels

YPN Emerging Leader of the Year Award

2016 Brooke Hall

2015 Debbie Madeley

2014 Marian Slahor

VENDOR CONTACTS



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ILLINOIS STATE ALLIANCE OF YMCAS



The Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs offers unique opportunities and benefits to Illinois YMCAs. Get involved today and experience the benefits of Alliance membership:

- Scholarship fund for Y professionals
- Advocacy on critical public policy issues affecting Ys
- Training opportunities through Alliance events, online and in person
- Peer groups for sharing knowledge, resources, best practices
- Joint negotiations and group purchasing, which results in better prices for all Ys
- Opportunity to access statewide grant funding
- Statewide initiatives

2026 RALLY PLANS

Next year, the YMCA celebrates 175 years in the U.S.! YMCA of the USA is hosting General Assembly in mid-September – just a few days before our usual Fall Staff Rally dates. Because of this, the 2026 Rally will be a one-day, program-focused event with pre-conference training opportunities. If you are interested in helping to plan this unique event, please contact Wendy Bonilla, wendy.bonilla@illinoisymcas.org.



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