

our voice

eliminating racism
empowering women

ywca

volume 4.3 spring 2011 southeastern massachusetts

special 100th edition: voices

the co-ed club still meets after 65 years



YWCA Co-ed Club pictured at Horseneck Beach for a "Pirates Party" - August 28, 1949

Throughout World War II, nearly every weekend the YWCA of New Bedford bussed women over to Camp Edwards and Otis Air Force Base to give the soldiers of the U.S. Military a little entertainment. The women were members of the United Service Organization led by Ms. Dorothea Drinkwater, a tough and loyal woman, loved by all. The U.S.O Hostesses did an impeccable job showing their men of war a great and fun time. Some of these enjoyable activities that the U.S.O put on included dances, dinners, and parties.

The women brought a breath of fresh air to the hard working soldiers, and for a few hours on those divine weekends everyone got to let loose and have a great time.

Towards the end of the war, Ms. Drinkwater formed a group called "Club Y." This group was formulated with young women who were former hostesses of the U.S.O and were still interested in being a part of a fun and productive club. When the war was over and the soldiers came home, Ms. Drinkwater decided that inviting men to join "Club Y" would be a spectacular idea. With the addition of men, "Club Y" converted into the "Co-Ed Club" in 1946. The first president of the Co-Ed Club was Mr. Don Canto of New Bedford and the first secretary was Marge Pedro, the two would eventually become the first marriage that came out of the club, but certainly not the last. The two group leaders were introduced by Mrs. Eugenia Florio, formally known as Ms. Eugenia Tavares, a beautiful and charismatic woman from New Bedford, who has been with the YWCA and the Co-Ed Club since World War II.

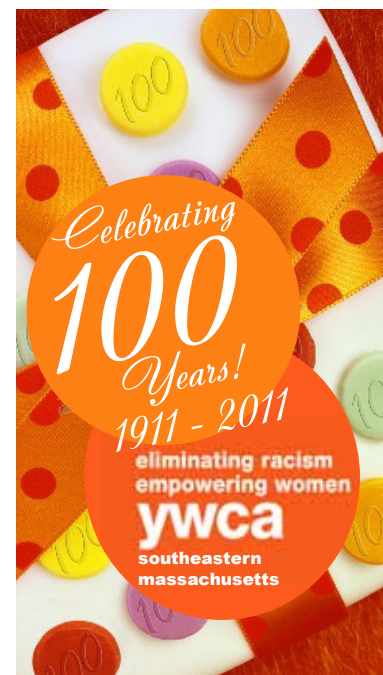
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Save the Dates



women
of distinction

eliminating racism
empowering women **ywca**

ywca women of distinction awards luncheon
wednesday, may 11, 2011 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm
wamsutta club \$50 per person

go to www.ywcasema.org for tickets
for more info, please contact:
gail fortes, executive director
508-999-3255 or gfortes@ywcasema.org

100th Anniversary Golf Tournament



May 31, 2011
The Kittansett Club
Marion
Tee Off at 8:30am
Lunch at 12:30pm

Please consider participating in this special 100th Anniversary event to support a new building addition for the YWCA's childcare and women's housing.

One Foursome
\$1250

Single Tournament Player
\$300

Lunch, Awards and Auction
\$100

To reserve your level of participation,
please register online: www.ywcasema.org
or contact Gail Fortes:
gfortes@ywcasema.org or 508-999-3255

red dress fashion show & silent auction



YWCA Red Dress Fashion Show and Silent Auction 2011 was a huge success with a sold out crowd in attendance. Models pictured above: Caroline Cuccia, Shelly Correia and Miss Massachusetts Outstanding Teen, Kendall Wipff

international women's day ~ 100 years!

sister 2 sister conference



Nearly 150 women attended the International Women's Day Networking Event held at the Wamsutta Club by The Women's Center, The Women's Fund and YWCA Southeastern MA

Nearly 50 girls attended the Sister 2 Sister Conference on Mar. 19th at UMASS Dartmouth.

voices ~ yvonne m. drayton



By: Kiah Murphy

YWCA Intern/Senior, Tilton School, NH

I sit down with Yvonne Drayton in the conference room of the YWCA's Levi Standish House. My initial reaction is intimidation. Ms. Drayton sits down confidently and is clearly ready for any question I am about to throw at her. I ask her to describe to me her involvement with the YWCA and she tells me that her mother began to bring her to the New Bedford location when she was thirteen years old for tennis lessons. For many years Yvonne played tennis and shortly after she became a part of Y-teen until she graduated from high school. In 1987 Yvonne returned to the YWCA and in 1988 she became a board member. By 1991, Ms. Drayton was the Interim-Executive Director and on January 1, 1992 she became the Executive Director.

Ms. Drayton is a member of the National Board of the YWCA as a representative of the New England Region. She tells me that this opportunity has allowed her to interact and communicate with women on an international level. Over the past ten years, Ms. Drayton has traveled all over the world, some official business for the YWCA but most personal, in attempts to connect the YWCA all around the world. She

has been exposed to a wide variety of cultures. When I ask Ms. Drayton what has been the greatest change since her time at the YWCA, she says the fact that many local organizations have become social service agencies and more than just advocacies for women.

Ms. Drayton explains to me that on a local level the YWCA gives people opportunity, the chance for personal development, and the ability to learn new things. When asked what her favorite aspect of being a part of the YWCA was, Ms. Drayton responds by saying, "The wide range of elements and activities the organization has to offer and the cultivating leadership skills one may learn." Not only did Ms. Drayton expand her horizons, but she also met many of her closest friends through the YWCA, and many of which she is still in contact with today.

When I ask Ms. Drayton to tell me about her views on racism, she explains to me that these challenges are not necessarily intentional, but rather acts created by ignorance. She also tells me that despite advancements and an influx of more diverse and open-minded people, racism is still deeply embedded in our country's society. Ms. Drayton tells me that she once had an anonymous letter sent to her saying, "Why don't you go back to Africa?" She keeps this letter as a reminder that racism still exists and something must be done about it.

Yvonne Drayton is one of the most confident and intelligent woman I have ever met. Although I only spoke with her for a short while, I could see her glowing and strong personality the second she walked through the door.

voices ~ marge jenney



*By: Kiah Murphy
YWCA Intern/Senior, Tilton School, NH*

Marjorie Jenney was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts. At the age of thirteen she began to get highly involved with the YWCA of New Bedford. As I sit across from Marjorie and ask her questions about her childhood experiences with the YWCA, she is simply gleaming with excitement. She begins to tell me all the extraordinary activities she participated in as a teenager at the YWCA. She tells me, “The place was booming!” There was always some sort of social event being held, things such as dances and movie nights.

From a young age, Marjorie had a large role at the YWCA. She was a strong and hard working woman with high ambitions. Marjorie explains to me she had, “Good foresight.” She saw into the future and knew what had to be done in order to gain success. Marjorie also tells me that her “mind was expansive” and she was good at getting any job done efficiently. To Marjorie, the YWCA was not just an organization, but rather a culture and a lifestyle. Marjorie’s entire family was involved with the YWCA; her children participated

in many activities there. She tells me how, “The organization gives women a wider range of knowledge and opportunity. The YWCA is made up of all different kinds of women from all over the community, all of which are extremely intelligent and highly intellectual.”

Marjorie made many advancements to the YWCA of New Bedford. She was president for over five years. She started an investment club, along with the Next to New Shop. Marjorie is also responsible for creating a program for widowed women. She tells me she was very good at finding the funding to support and enhance the YWCA. Marjorie was one of only two women to be involved with the New Bedford Institute on Savings. She said that one of the greatest changes during her time at the YWCA was when the organization grew from just being, youth and social programs downtown, to actually spreading the YWCA philosophy all over the greater community.

It is quite obvious to me that Marjorie Jenney is very passionate about the YWCA. She has been a member all of her life. Marjorie tells me that over all, her favorite and longest lasting memory from being part of the YWCA was the lifelong friendships she made. She says that she still sees many of her close friends from the YWCA on a regular basis. The last thing Marjorie tells me had a lasting effect on me. She says, “The YWCA is in my bones, it’s who I am.” I found this to be completely amazing. I was sitting across from a woman who was so genuine and passionate about an organization that has changed the lives of so many people.

“The YWCA is in my bones, it’s who I am.”

voices ~ rosemary medeiros saber



By: Victoria Saber
YWCA Intern/Senior, New Bedford High School

Rosemary Medeiros Saber began working in the city from a young age. Her involvement with the YWCA began when she was in her early twenties. As a young working woman she connected with their strong advocacy for women and history. She was approached by Grace Young, a program director, to work on the Action Audit for Change Committee. She speaks highly of Grace as a very involved member, always promoting the organization in the best light.

Soon after starting her work with the organization, Rosemary Saber became a member of the YWCA Board of Directors. At the time Jean Campbell was the Executive Director and continued to be for the majority of the time she was involved. When speaking about many of the women she worked with, "outstanding" is used on several occasions. "The women who were involved with the YWCA were all exceptional in their own field, and the work they did together for the organization was undeniably outstanding. So many wonderful women made up the board, staff, and volunteer team," she expressed to me. Serving as president, on two separate occasions, Rosemary Medeiros, at the time, expressed her honor to work on numerous

projects and to witness such growth in the organization. During the time she worked with the YWCA several large steps were taken by the board. For example, the Levi Standish House which today has housed countless events was purchased throughout the time of her tenure. The Levi Standish House was purchased from the New Bedford Women's Club. She recalls being involved in the planting of the north facing garden, as well as several other household contributions. The care the women took of the restoration of the Levi Standish House and grounds was important to them and they cared for the space as their own. Today the rooms are still filled with women eager about the work they are doing and the time they share with the YWCA.

In 1975, Rosemary attended the National Convention at Notre Dame in Indiana. Jean Campbell, Janet Ratcliffe and Sister Rosellen Gallogaly all made the trip to Notre Dame as well. To this day on many occasions my mother Rosemary brings up the time she had at the convention and the memories she is confident will never get old. Over thirty years later the relationships she shares with these women are still strong and that is evident through all of the ties she gained while with the YWCA.

While president, Rosemary Saber worked to strengthen the board by getting younger women more involved. Several young women were recruited in pairs over the years to serve on the board and offer a young perspective into the concerns and challenges facing them at the time. This offered a younger point of view to the Board. Dr. Patrica Andrade was one of those young women. Rosemary was very interested in including various viewpoints. At the time of her tenure on the board, she was a young woman beginning her career and offered that outlook to the women serving alongside her.

"The personal encouragement I always received from the wise women of the organization is something I will never lose," she added. Being a part of a group that did so much to strengthen women within the YWCA and in their own professions was very important to her and she honored the work they did. The contributions the YWCA has and does offer are endless and it is clear that any time spent with the organization is time aimed in an honorable direction. When speaking with my mother about the YWCA, it is clear she could speak openly about her involvement for time on end. As she reflects back on the time she offered to the organization, short stories come up and sparks of the relationships she made. Her focused work ethic when it came to the YWCA was what sparked work done well. It is evident that years later she is still so proud of the YWCA and of the time she spent involved.

voices ~ eugenia florio and the coed club

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YWCA Co-ed Club Gathering in 1971

I had the great pleasure of meeting and interviewing Mrs. Florio about her experiences during the Co-Ed Club. My job task was to go and gather facts and information about the club for this newsletter. But the things I learned after speaking with Mrs. Florio go beyond this paper and the YWCA itself. After my meeting, I left Mrs. Florio's house having a totally different perspective on the true meaning of friendship and love, the two platforms that the Co-Ed Club are still based off of.

Eugenia elaborated on the club's gatherings, and how they usually consisted of a dance, or a swim party, a field trip, or even boating; you can pretty much assume there was never a dull moment during any meeting of the Co-Ed Club's! In 1975, the club was made up of over fifty men and women. Over the course

of many years numbers have started to dwindle, but the spirit of the group keeps growing stronger. Eugenia explained to me, as members began to age it became more difficult to meet and carry on with their typical exciting social events, so the club began to call themselves the "Round Robin Group." The Round Robin Group was and still is based off of a "pen pal system" as their means of communication, rather than regular meetings. The group started off with eighteen members and as of last year there are eleven members remaining. The Round Robin Group meets annually, each time at a different member's house. The meeting consists of drinks, dinner, a gift exchange, the sharing of photos, and of course reminiscing.

At the conclusion of my meeting with Mrs. Florio, I finally asked her what her favorite memories were from the Co-Ed Club and Round Robin Group. She stressed to me that the lifelong friendships and loyalty she found from the people in the club opened up her eyes to the true meaning of life. The support and love she was surrounded by was the greatest part of being a member of the Co-Ed Club.

This is my first summer working here at the YWCA, and after my two hour interview with Eugenia Florio I realized the true meaning of this organization. No matter what color, ethnicity, sex or religion you are, deep down we all want the same thing, to be loved, to be accepted, and to be happy. And when I open the door of the Levi Standish House each morning to walk into work, I am greeted with, people who are loving, people who demand acceptance, and people who are truly happy, and boy is it a glorious and heartwarming sight.



YWCA Co-ed Club Christmas Party in 2009, now known as the "Round Robin Group"

By: Kiah Murphy
YWCA Intern/Senior, Tilton School, NH

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