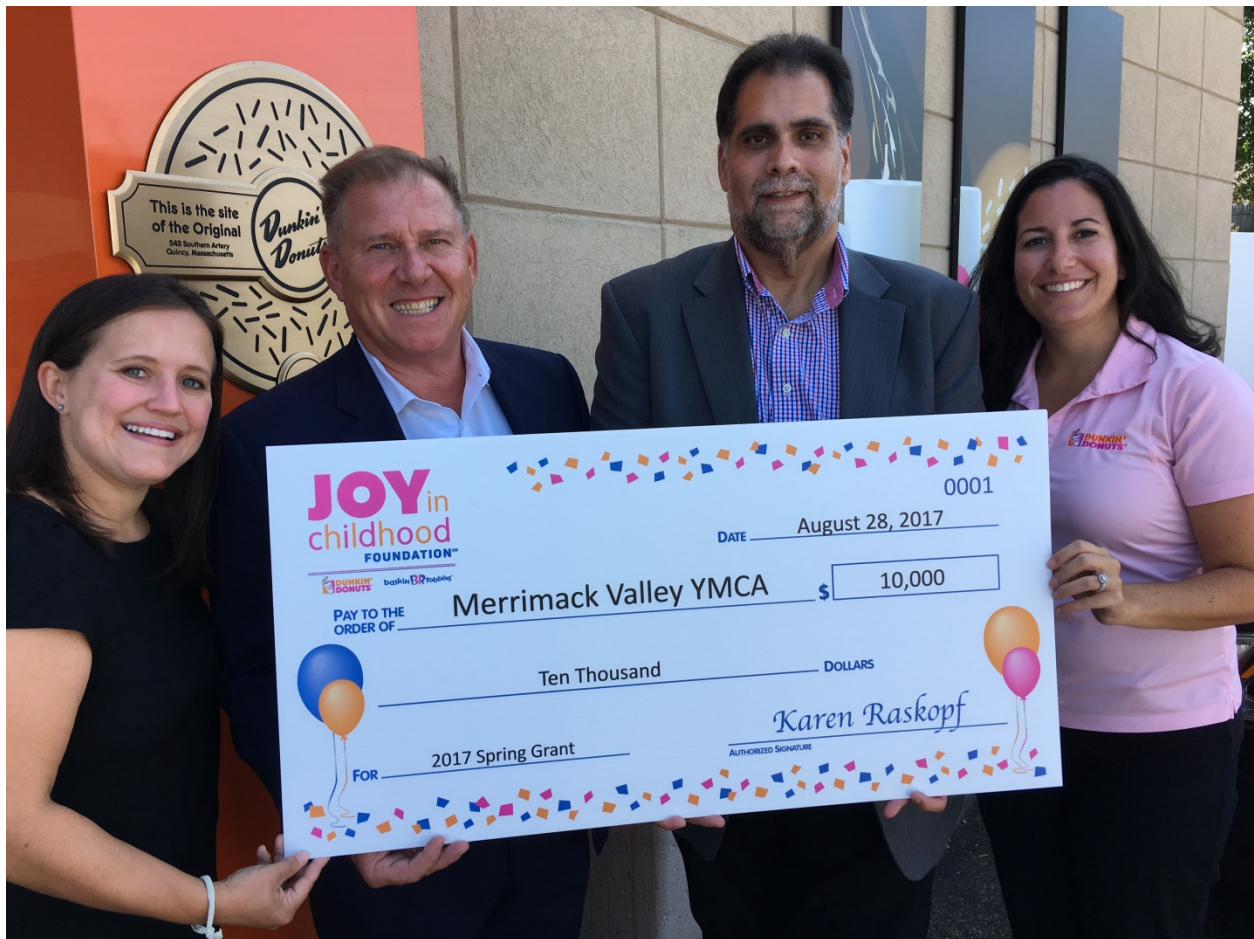


Merrimack Valley YMCA receives grant to feed hungry kids

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LAWRENCE —The Merrimack Valley YMCA has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Joy in Childhood Foundation, formerly the Dunkin' Donuts & Baskin-Robbins Community Foundation. The grant will be used provide healthy food for children, teens, and families in need through the Merrimack Valley YMCA Food Program.

Children and their families receive bags of food for the weekend through the Weekend Backpack Program, which is made possible thanks to a partnership between the Merrimack Valley YMCA,

the YMCA of USA/Walmart Foundation, and the Merrimack Valley Food Bank. The YMCA's Meals for Teens program offers free meals each weeknight for teens participating in afters-school programs at the Lawrence YMCA. These suppers also provide teens with a time for fellowship: to eat, talk, and connect without phones.

“By offering healthy meals to children in the community, the Merrimack Valley YMCA Food Program is an important part of the YMCA's overall mission of nurturing the potential of every child and teen,” said Merrimack Valley YMCA President and CEO Gary Morelli. “The Joy in Childhood Foundation is a great partner and we are thankful for their support.”

Last year, the Food Program provided more than 92,000 meals, impacting more than 450 children and their families. The organization is currently raising funds to expand the program even more, including increasing the number of children and teens reached by offering meals on weekends and holidays, expanding the backpack program to include children and families served by the Methuen and Andover/North Andover YMCAs, and opening a food pantry at the Lawrence YMCA. To learn more about the program and how you can help, visit www.mvymca.org/meals.