

Inspiring YMCA Annual Meeting

By Dalia Diaz

Every year at this time, we hear about the accomplishments of the previous year of the Merrimack Valley YMCA and it never ceases to amaze us. With branches in Andover/North Andover, Lawrence and Methuen, they also have the camps that provide so much joy for a brief part of the summers to city children who may have never experienced spending time in an island and walking through the woods.

Deborah Hope, chair of the Board of Directors was beaming reading from a very long list things like \$2.5 million in subsidized child care; \$802,642 in membership and program financial aid; \$476,339 in outreach programs and \$424,492 in housing assistance. Considering that the YMCA does not receive grants, everything is possible through donations and membership dues.

As part of this celebration, Kyle McInnis, Professor and Dean, Health Sciences at Merrimack College explained his close connection with Merrimack Valley YMCA. Immediately after meeting Frank Kenneally, he knew this was going to be a very meaningful partnership.

Through their fundraising efforts, they were able to raise more than \$2 million for the Active Science program that was established in Lawrence Public Schools, creating a sustainable enterprise that works

in 10 Lawrence schools providing physical education, musical instruction at the Music Club and swimming.

Their Campus Kitchen Project involved 4,000 students who ordered, repackaged and distributed unused food at the college cafeteria and then distributed to community organizations and the Single Room Occupancy (SRO - 72 men living upstairs at the YMCA.) The conversations between the students and the men from the SRO are so profound learning about them while learning about life. At the end of the year, the students have enriched their lives more than the men.

This kitchen project also donates large amounts of food to the pantry available to families in need every Thursday from 4 to 6 PM and which is coordinated by Cathy Flynn Redard.

“The Y is a living laboratory,” said Mr. McInnis. “Our partnership is strong because of Frank Kenneally.”

Frank credited Ethel Cruz of the Leahy School in Lawrence for the help she provided with all the programs being held there.

Our city suffered from the gas explosions of September 13, 2018 and the Y was able to have a role in the relief of the residents. They were able to use the showers and accessed food at the Andover/North Andover and Lawrence branches. ANA offered memberships while the emergency was on going. In the end, 18,273 people used the showers.

“We have been committed to this community and will continue our commitment to them,” said Mr. Kenneally.



Five volunteers received awards. From the left, Cathleen Landry, CFO gave it to Ronn Faigen; Donna Aldrich received hers from Claudia Soo Hoo, Sr. Executive Director of the ANA Branch. At right, Frank Kenneally. Not able to attend were Diane Huntress, Camping Services; Rev. William Ingraham, Methuen Branch; and Maureen Yadwood.



At left, three young people who made the impact statement: Devin Clemons, Abbie Reyes and Sócrates De La Cruz.



Jay Caporale, VP, Corporate & Foundation Engagement welcoming the YMCA.



Kyle McInnis explaining his enjoyment working with the YMCA.



Outgoing chair of the board Deborah Hope with her son and his friend.

