



# Ozark Trails

Newsletter of the Greater Ozark Chapter of YMCA Alumni  
Serving Missouri, Northern Arkansas & Eastern Kansas  
February 2026

Nels Bagnardi, President  
Marty Rogers, Newsletter Editor

*The mission of YMCA Alumni: To provide opportunities for members to Connect, Travel, and Serve while nurturing worldwide Christian fellowship.*

## From the President's Desk...

Greetings! I hope that you all are treating life well. Welcome to the latest issue of Ozarks Trails. We are committed to maintaining meaningful connections with our Members, and ensuring that the Greater Ozark Chapter remains a place of friendship, mission, giving back, and fellowship.



As I look outside through my window at a 12" snow fall, I realize how lucky I am to be in a location where I can enjoy the 4 seasons. Winter is a time to reflect, refresh and rejuvenate. Spring is a time to enjoy fellowship with fellow Alumni at the Greater Ozark Alumni spring retreat in Branson. Summer is a time to volunteer at a local Y or charity with fellow alumni, and fall is a time to get together at an alumni chapter event. I love the 4 seasons of alumni engagement.

I am looking for ideas for member engagement, i.e., Cluster meetings, day trips, lunch gatherings, sporting events, shows, picnics, volunteer opportunities, etc. If you are interested in being involved with our Alumni Chapter Board in a leadership position, please let me know - we are currently looking for a Vice President to assist our Team. I would be happy to discuss leadership positions with you.

I hope to see you down the road at future Alumni gatherings, events, volunteer opportunities, etc. Have a super fantastic 2026.



**Nels Bagnardi**  
President

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All blue, underlined words are links to web sites for further exploring.

## Highlights from The Connection: National news from YMCA Alumni

- Perspective, an e-zine for YMCA Alumni, will arrive in your inbox February 16.
- Travel Club has new offerings for 2026 and is starting to plan for 2027
- The YMCA turns 175 this year; watch the PSA “There’s no place like this place.”



The biggest news is the announcement that the 2027 YMCA Alumni Reunion will be in Kansas City, hosted by the Central Region. More details will follow in future newsletters.



Three YMCA Alumni members traveled to Mexico City the last week of January to lead a workshop on fundraising. Mexico, like many other countries, does not have a culture of philanthropy. Bob Martin, a former development director, Phill Morgan, YMCA Alumni President, and Dave Rogers, YMCA Alumni Vice-President Central Region, along with Julian Villegas from the San Diego County Y, worked with national staff members from Mexico. The training grew out of an October 2024 ISC visit to Tijuana to work with migrant children.

Julian and Valeria Ruiz are the directors of the Bi-national Coalition, a collaboration between the YMCA of San Diego County and the Tijuana, Mexico YMCA to help with border issues affecting both communities.

### RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

February 28<sup>th</sup> is the deadline to renew your YMCA Alumni membership. The easiest way to renew is by clicking the Reconnect & Renew link below to continue getting the Connections newsletter.

The links below will take you to the websites shown.

[YMCA Alumni](#)

[YMCA Alumni  
Travel Club](#)

[Events & Chapter  
Resources](#)

[YMCA Alumni  
Facebook](#)

[Reconnect & Renew  
Membership](#)

[Join Us - New  
memberships](#)



## Greater Ozark Chapter Meeting May 1-3, 2026

We're gathering May 1 - 3 for fellowship and to enjoy all that Branson has to offer including good food, entertainment, and shopping. We will hear about what's new for YMCA Alumni and conduct a bit of business.

### Hotel: Comfort Inn at Thousand Hills

The Comfort Inn at Thousand Hills is centrally located at 203 S Wildwood Drive and is convenient to all the action in Branson. The hotel offers a full hot breakfast, an exercise room, heated salt-water pool with hot tub, concierge service for tickets, parking, and WiFi. You must call the hotel directly at 417-335-4727 and ask for the Greater Ozark YMCA Alumni reservation block by March 31<sup>st</sup> to receive the group rate of \$105 per night before taxes.

The conference room on the second floor will be our base for the weekend and there is an elevator.



### Entertainment



[The Haygoods](#) are Branson's most popular show! Five brothers and one sister produce incredible music with amazing special effects. We have a block of tickets reserved at \$40 each, which is not included in the registration fee. We hope everyone will join us Saturday night for this lively event!

**FREE TIME** - There's a lot to do in Branson and many options for restaurants. Check out [Explore Branson](#) for ideas.

### Food



[Gettin' Basted](#) will cater our Friday night dinner at the Comfort Inn. This meal is included in the registration fee.



We'll carpool to [Little Hacienda Mexican Kitchen](#) on Saturday night for a delicious meal. We have a private dining room, but everyone will order off the menu and pay for their own meal.

**Greater Ozark Chapter  
Branson, MO  
May 1-3, 2026**



**Friday, May 1:**

2:00-4:00 pm Registration and check-in at Comfort Inn at Thousand Hills, Branson, MO  
4:00-5:30 pm Mixer and sharing  
5:30 Welcome, Introduction of new members, Invocation  
6:00 pm Dinner at hotel catered by **Getting Basted BBQ\*\***  
7:30 - ? Socializing and games

**Saturday, May 2:**

7:30 - 8:45 am Breakfast in hotel , included with hotel room  
9:00 - 11:00 am Devotions and memorials  
Ozark Chapter 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Look Back by Debbie Redmond  
YMCA Alumni National Update  
Updates on World Service, International Service Corps, National Service Project  
Emergency Assistance Fund  
11:00 am Free Time: Lunch on your own, shows, shopping, sharing, sightseeing  
4:45 pm Car pool to Little Hacienda Mexican Kitchen  
Dine as a group; Order from the menu and pay for your own meal  
7:00 pm Carpool for Clay Cooper Theatre for **The Haygoods** show

**Sunday, May 3:**

7:30-8:45 am Breakfast in hotel lobby, included with hotel room  
9:00 am Devotion in conference room  
9:15 am Chapter photo  
9:30 am Adjourn - Continue to explore Branson if you wish; safe travels home!  
9:30 am Ozark Chapter Executive Committee meeting

**YMCA Alumni  
Greater Ozark Chapter Meeting  
May 1 - 3, 2026  
Conference Registration Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse/Guest Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(First & last name as it should appear on name tag)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Primary Member Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse/Partner Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email primary member \_\_\_\_\_

Email spouse/partner member \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact at home: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. # \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee includes Friday dinner, coffee and snacks. The Haygoods show is not included in registration fee.

Early-Bird Registration Fee (before March 31) -\$35 per person

# Persons \_\_\_\_\_ x \$35 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

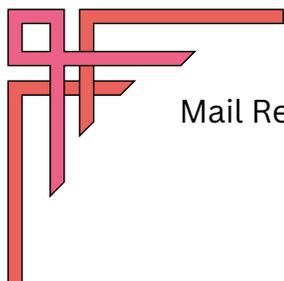
or Registration Fee (after March 31) - \$40 per person: # Persons \_\_\_\_\_ x \$40 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Tickets to The Haygoods show \$40 per person # Persons \_\_\_\_\_ x \$40 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Voluntary contribution to help support the Greater Ozark Chapter \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

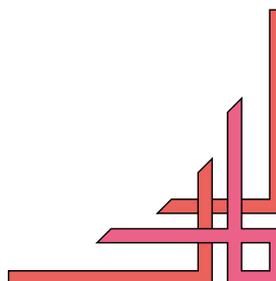
**Make checks payable to YMCA Alumni Greater Ozark Chapter**



Print Registration Form

Mail Registration Form and Registration Fee to:

**Judy Bagnardi  
305 Hawkwood Pl  
Desoto, MO 63020**



## News from around the Chapter

### Nels & Judy Bagnardi:



We are looking forward to the coming new year with our alumni group. 2025 was a somewhat quiet year for the Bagnardi's. We have a large yard with numerous flower beds and a vegetable garden, which we spent a lot of time in before Nels had a full shoulder replacement in late summer. This surgery prevented us from traveling to New England for our annual trip to see family and friends, but we did make it home to upstate New York for Christmas and spent time with Nels' family, including his 97-year-old father. Our daughter, Emma, who lives in the Berkshires, was able to join us at Grandpa's. Our plans for 2026 will include more trips and traveling, God willing.

**Les Boone:** Les has enjoyed family time recently, although he is eager for the start of baseball season. He watched his grandson, Keaton, at a volleyball tournament; spent time with his children Perry, Laurel, and Tim; enjoyed Christmas with the Boones, including his cocker spaniel, Pepper.



### Charlie Lord:

Royals Spring Training Baseball is just around the corner from "Surprise, Arizona"!

This year I have a book signing in Phoenix March 14 promoting my book "A Love Story Between 2 Worlds"! A 3rd and final edition will be published in 2028 after we receive final details of Peggy's murder investigation. I will get to attend 2 Royals Spring Training games along with a couple of hikes in the "White Tank Mountains" just Southwest of Surprise!

I wrote an article about Martin Luther King and the Montgomery, Alabama YMCA for Linked In on Martin Luther King Day. The editors tell me it is one of the highest read pieces they have had.

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7419143518201249792/>

Wishing everyone a safe and Happy 2026!

White Tank Mountains close to Surprise, Arizona.



Greetings from **Dick and Jani Flynn:**

Surviving the winter in Kansas this year, our first in cold weather for many years. Hoping to head to Florida later in the spring to catch some of the St. Louis Cardinal Spring Training games.

We had a wonderful December, celebrating the Christmas holiday with all of our children and grandchildren. It is always fun to hear about their lives, their jobs, and schools.

We are looking forward to watching our grandson's Yale lacrosse team play starting with their first game against West Point in February, as several of their games will be on ESPN+. Our granddaughter's high school lacrosse games are streamed, so we can watch her games wherever they are playing.

We are looking forward to our granddaughter's graduation in May from Medical School and following two weeks later to her wedding. Our oldest granddaughter and her husband who have been living in Slovakia the past three years will be moving to Munich, Germany in June.

Looking forward to seeing everyone this spring in Branson.



**Dave & Marty Rogers:**

We traveled a lot during the first half of 2025 but spent the last months of 2025 at home as Marty recovered from a knee replacement. The recovery has gone well, and she is ready to make travel plans.

Dave enjoyed his trip to Mexico City described in the ISC news. He'll be traveling to Lima, Peru, with new high school graduates on a church mission trip in late spring.

We had a very nice Christmas time with our children and significant other, even though they had to leave early to avoid the snowstorm heading into Minnesota. They enjoyed tennis outdoors on Friday afternoon and by Saturday night were settled in for the storm.

**Bill & Mary Ching:**



Bill and I have been looking out the window at all the snow and our pond has frozen over, so not much new here. We were able to have lunch in Kansas City before the snow with Karron and Bruce Wands. We were on our way to see our grandson Nick in Lawrence, Kansas. We had a great visit both places.

Our next adventure will be our grandson Nathan's wedding. Bill and I are hosting the rehearsal dinner at our house, so a lot of planning is going on. This younger generation does not like formal events, so the dinner will be a casual Texas bar-b-que with 30 people. It will be an adventure in preparation for the wedding on Sunday in St Louis's Forest Park.

**Renee Godinez:**



I went back to work at YMCA Trout Lodge and Camp Lakewood as a consultant for 5 months to help with their Annual Campaign and Endowment fundraising efforts. Any donations are appreciated. 😊

**Karen Anderson:**

I'm sorry I'm not going to be able to make your Branson trip. My daughter is graduating the next week from Wheaton College with her PhD in New Testament Biblical Studies. I continue to be their primary grandparent caregiver for her toddler, turning 22 months on Feb 2. I have been driving to Wylie, TX, about an hour each way, 3-4 days a week, staying over most Wed-Fridays. They are expecting their second child, a daughter, on June 2, so life will continue to be busy for them and for me.

I was able to attend the Schreiner fall gathering in Cloudcroft. Two of our members have vacation homes there and one has moved there full time. Our spring gathering will be in College Station April 14-16. We have lost three active members, two in the fall and one since that meeting.



Schreiner Chapter friends at Cloudcroft



**Debbie & Charley Redmond:**

Anniversaries seem to be the theme for us this past year. We went to Washington, Iowa, for their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Y's Men's Club. In October, we went to Grand Rapids, Michigan, for their 100th Anniversary of their club. In December, we went to Muskegon, Michigan, for their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. In between times, Debbie helped to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Zonta Club of St Louis in November. All of these celebrations had a theme (Debbie researching history for them). There are a couple more Anniversaries coming up which will include the Hawaii Region in September for their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The photo is of retired Y employee, Bob Williams alongside Debbie and Charley Redmond taken in October. He received recognition for donating to the Paul William Alexander Legacy Fund. Debbie and Charley each have the same recognition for donations too. Currently, Debbie is the Chair of the Gateway Region YMCA International Committee and Charley is on the Y's Men Constitution Review Committee.

**Dick & Naomi Hundley:**



It was fun spending Thanksgiving and Christmas with our daughter and family in Missouri. Our daughter from Connecticut flew in and we had a great time trying our best to spoil the great granddaughters. The end of January brought ice and sleet like we have never experienced before, even though we lived farther north in our younger years. We spent over a week iced in but were well stocked on food and supplies so all is well.

Our lives still center around the church activities, with Dick teaching Sunday School and Naomi being the Treasurer. We look forward to seeing everyone again in Branson in May.

## **Jerry Prado-Shaw:**

### *A Sacred Moment of Gratitude and Fellowship*

With hearts filled with gratitude to God, we gathered in joyful fellowship to celebrate the 100th birthday of Professor Hernán Antonio Romero Matute, from Venezuela—lovingly known as Hernán Romero—who now resides in Miami, Florida.

Hernán is a founding member of the YMCA in Venezuela and faithfully served the YMCA movement for 60 uninterrupted years. His life and ministry have been a living testimony of Christian service, humility, and steadfast faith. For generations across Latin America and the Caribbean, he has been a guiding light and spiritual reference, embodying the words he so often shared with joy and conviction: “Walking through life with faith and joy, serving others.”

Though not present physically in the photo, our fellowship was enriched by the prayerful presence—via Zoom—of YMCA retirees from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Together, we formed one community of faith, united in thanksgiving for a life well lived, a calling faithfully answered, and a witness that continues to inspire us all.

May God continue to bless our beloved brother Hernán, and may his legacy of faith, service, and joy remain a living testimony among us.



Standing, from left to right:

Sandra Vargas, Giovani Méndez, Latin American YMCA retirees Sandra and Carlos Vanegas, Libia Sirney Vargas (Latinet Chair), Juan Manuel Duque Velásquez, Jerry Prado Shaw, Cristina von Lindenberg, Jorge González, and our guest Emilse Muñoz.

Seated, from left to right:

Gladys de Rojas, Omaira de Romero, Hernán Romero, Martha Prado, and Mary Rivera de Crotto.

## **Dave Moliga:**



Hi all. Just surviving the Snow and cold these last weeks. So grateful that the Lord has given me these weeks to enjoy a quiet time with Him

Having to consider possible surgery on my neck, but otherwise feel well, with slower walking. (Not running races anymore) Looking forward to Branson. God is good all the time.



**Bruce & Karon Wands:**

Way too many more doctor visits that don't interest anyone but the collection agencies. And dealing with our first great grand baby. DID I say FIRST GREAT GRAND BABY? FIRST GREAT GRAND BABY?? That's why Karon is so discombobulated!!! Oliver Russel Deane could arrive any day now, but the official due date is Feb 14th. I enjoy contacting fellow Alumni throughout the year and request everyone put me in their address book and don't just think it is a TELEMARKETING call. Orrrrr, they have already done so.

***In Memoriam***



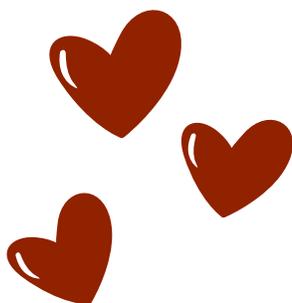
**Phil Hellweg** died November 11, 2025. Phil was Chief Financial Officer for the St. Louis Region YMCA and was a lifetime member of YMCA Alumni. In addition to his Y work, Phil was an active volunteer for Boy Scouts, Rotary, YMCA of the Ozarks, the Museum of Transportation and his church. He is survived by his wife, Shirley; daughter, Judith; and son, John; 7 grandchildren; and a brother, Allen.

Bill Ching remembers Phil: "I worked with Phil in the Greater St Louis Y for many years. He was a great guy to work with. I always told Phil to give me the monthly report of the branches before the boss would see them so I would know the answers to some financial indicators that were bound to pop up at one branch or the other. He always had a good sense of humor and was a good colleague to work with. He loved his time working with the Scouts, the Rotary Club, and his favorite, working with other volunteers at the Train Museum."

**Mott Chapter Meeting Spring 2026**

Mott Chapter meeting will be held April 23-24, 2026, in Fairfield, Iowa, hosted by Jim Weaton and Mary Carol and Jack Fish. We will be attending a Neil Diamond Tribute Concert at the Arts and Convention Center, April 23 at 7:30 pm. The afternoon on the 23rd we will tour Creative Edge which manufactures Tarazzo Floors and Stained glass windows followed by supper at the Fairfield Country Club. Business meeting will be on the morning of April 24 at the former Hawthorne Bldg. More details and registration in the attachment to the email.

That is it from the Mott Chapter. Stay warm.



***Happy Valentine's Day to all!***

