

PERSPECTIVE

e-zine of YMCA Alumni

Everybody Wants My Money - Nick Zimmer

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Analysts point out that retirees, unlike younger investors, often prioritize consistent income streams over growth potential. This trend reflects a larger shift toward preservation rather than speculation.

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It's All About Those Assets - Bob Hastedt

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An Option for Giving - Bob Warnock



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Happy in Retirement? - Carmelita Gallo

When You Wish Upon a Star - Gary Graham

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Your Personal Controller in Retirement - Dianne Clark

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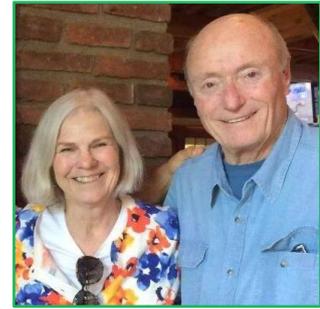
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Editors' Note:

By Craig Altschul and Peggi Simmons



The inaugural issue of the “new” Perspective is behind us. This winter 2026 issue marks the first of many quarterly issues to come.

We got a kick out of our long-time friend and colleague Bill Cameron’s note after he received the first issue.

“I actually felt emotional when I opened the resurrected Perspective. It looks so much like my beloved Perspective of yore. I’m looking forward to reading future issues.”

Bill, as so many of you will remember, wrote volumes of “*The Last Word*” column in Perspective over many years, and in our humble opinion, remains the finest writer and “philosopher” in our YMCA midst.

Frankly, and judging from the many kind notes we received after the first issue was released in October, we all experienced a tiny bit of emotion or, at the very least, a sense of déjà vu.

We’re glad you liked it. We think you’ll enjoy this issue as well. We took a completely non-technical approach to the theme: “*Personal Finance for Today’s Retirees.*” Make that a practical approach. We hope the stories are fun to read, informative, and relatable to you as fellow retirees.

We’ll see you next in May when our spring issue delves into the significant role travel can and does play in enhancing our retirement years, at least when we make the right travel choices.

Craig Altschul and **Peggi Simmons** have owned and operated craig altschul + associates (ca+a) for 52 years. Their first client in 1974 was the Association of Professional Directors (APD) of the YMCA. Their first assignment from Executive Director Bob Goff was to create a magazine/journal that would encompass stories of administration, physical education, and personal and professional growth, challenging YMCA Directors to write and share their expertise. Thus, Perspective was born. Craig, Peggi, and colleague Steve Kendall combined to publish the magazine for 36 years. ca+a currently directs and produces communications programs for National YMCA Alumni.

PRE-SPECTIVE

Crypto: Pros and Cons for Retirees

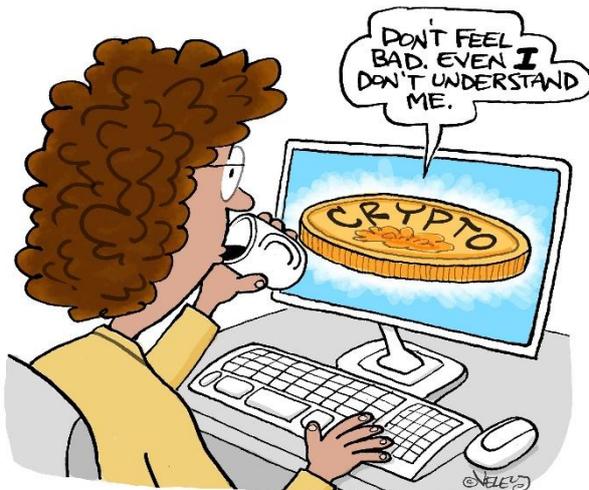
“Bitcoin is everything people don’t know about computers, combined with everything they don’t understand about money.”
– British comedian John Oliver



Cryptocurrency (Bitcoin and its peers) remains a mystery to many, if not most, of us, despite being “out there” for nearly two decades. Retirees investing in crypto face a mix of potential benefits and significant risks. Thinking about it? Here are some pros and cons from several well-regarded professional sources.

Pros:

Crypto, according to Nasdaq, offers an alternative form of monetary system exposure that can serve as insurance against long-term currency devaluation or economic instability during retirement years. It provides diversification outside traditional asset classes.



Fidelity notes that cryptocurrencies have historically offered high returns during certain periods (e.g., Bitcoin averaging around 29.6 percent annually since 2018). Holding cryptocurrency in retirement accounts, such as Roth IRAs, may offer potential tax advantages, including tax-free growth and qualified withdrawals.

Some financial advisers view crypto as a long-term growth opportunity that can complement traditional investments in a diversified portfolio, according to AARP.

Cons:

Edelman Financial Engines believes volatility is a significant con. Crypto prices can fluctuate dramatically, with potential losses wiping out years of retirement savings in a matter of weeks. This can jeopardize retirees who rely on stable income from their portfolios.

Nasdaq warns that cryptocurrency investments require technical knowledge of wallet security, key management, and exchange risks. Retirees unfamiliar with digital technology face a higher risk of irrevocable loss due to mistakes or fraud.

Most traditional retirement plans do not yet offer crypto options. Our Y Retirement fund, for example, manages a single, broadly diversified portfolio, and participants do not have individual investment choices or direct access to specific asset classes, such as

cryptocurrency, within the plan itself. Boldin says holding crypto might require moving funds to specialized self-directed IRAs, which come with fees and complexities.

Crypto assets are not insured or protected like traditional securities, Fidelity notes, and there is a risk of hacking and loss due to exchanges or custodians failing.

Think Twice:

While cryptocurrency provides diversification and potential growth benefits for retirees with high risk tolerance and technical expertise, Edelman Financial Engines believes its high volatility, regulatory uncertainty, tax complexities, and security risks make it unsuitable as a core retirement investment for most. Prudent retirees, they say, should either avoid or limit crypto exposure to a small portion of their portfolios and consult financial advisors knowledgeable in digital assets before investing.

Sources:

Nasdaq: <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/5-reasons-invest-crypto-when-youre-retired-and-5-reasons-avoid-it>

Fidelity: <https://www.fidelity.com/learning-center/trading-investing/crypto-ira>

AARP: <https://www.aarp.org/money/retirement/crypto-in-401k/>

Edelman Financial Engines: <https://www.edelmanfinancialengines.com/education/investment-management/retirement-and-bitcoin/>

Boldin: <https://www.boldin.com/retirement/cryptocurrencies-and-your-retirement/>

Everybody Wants My Money

By Nick Zimmer

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” – Winston Churchill



I began working with American City Bureau, the nation's oldest fundraising firm, immediately upon my retirement from the Montgomery County YMCA in Red Oak, Iowa, in 2017. I transitioned to the work that I enjoyed most during my YMCA career: relationship building. My guess is that many of you would place “relationships” near the top of your list of most meaningful, impactful parts of your own YMCA professional careers.

Just as I am a professional fundraiser, I am also a donor, just like you are. Here are some thoughts and proven examples that may be helpful to you as a YMCA Alumni retiree and donor in finding the most comfortable “fits” for charitable giving among the numerous local, area, regional, state, national, and international causes. Yes, “everybody does want our money.”

Nearly all causes and project initiatives are good, meaningful, and potentially transformational. However, people give to people through formed relationships.

Many donors like us are familiar with the organizations to which we donate, including the YMCA, church, local library, fire department, college, hospital, and numerous others. However, sometimes we want to make a gift to an organization that is dear to our hearts, yet may be many miles away from us, possibly across the globe.

Thoroughly researching a nonprofit before donating provides us with several benefits, including maximizing the impact of our gift, preventing fraud, and ensuring that the organization's mission and values align with our own. There is often more to the story than meets the eye, even in a compelling television ad or mailing piece.

There are various resources we can utilize to conduct due diligence, such as charity evaluators and financial reports from nonprofit tax filings (Form 990s), which provide detailed financial information, including program spending and executive compensation. Several of those websites are noted at the end of this article.

Maximize your gift by evaluating a nonprofit's efficiency. We can determine whether a greater portion of donated funds is allocated directly to programs rather than administrative and fundraising costs.

Research allows donors to identify organizations that effectively and transparently deliver on their stated goals. This helps us feel more connected to the organization's work and see the tangible results of our support.

Researching the financial health and sustainability of an organization helps us identify those that are well-governed and stable. This is especially important if we aim to establish a lasting legacy.

Sadly, protection from fraud and scams in today's world is critical. Research helps us avoid fake charities that misuse donated funds. These scams often use names that sound like well-established organizations to mislead donors, especially during times of crisis. Avoid high-pressure tactics. A request for immediate donations over the phone or through other unverified channels is a red flag. Be cautious when providing credit card and other personal details.

Connect with a cause by evaluating a nonprofit's mission, values, and activities to ensure they align with your personal philanthropic priorities. This is especially important for donors with specific passions, such as those focused on disease research or educational initiatives. We can give with confidence and satisfaction once research has been completed.

Other forms of research include visiting the nonprofit's website and reading its newsletters and appeals for its projects. Having a clear mission and detailed information on programs, as well as annual reports, provides invaluable insights. Look for evidence of impact, such as success stories and testimonials. We can also conduct a simple online search for the charity's name, along with terms like "scam," "complaint," or "fraud," to identify possible red flags.

There is no single "correct" percentage of annual income to allot for philanthropy, but many retirees follow common guidelines, such as donating 3 to 10 percent. The ideal amount, of course, depends on your personal financial situation, values, and desired impact.

Planned and legacy giving offer amazing opportunities for both the donor and the organization. These gifts are arranged in the present but are paid out at a future date, such as after the donor's lifetime.

We all have choices to make a real difference, and yet, as donors, we can build the framework and foundation for how we wish to help others create a better place to live, work, and play today and well into the future. Together, great things do happen.

NICK ZIMMER was the founding Executive Director of the YMCA of Montgomery County in Red Oak, Iowa (1995-2017), where he transformed a storefront Y to a state-of-the-art 70,000-square-foot facility and built a \$4 million-plus endowment. He is a recipient of the North American YMCA Development Organization (NAYDO) "Excellence in Fundraising Eagle Award." Nick, a member of the Mott YMCA Alumni Chapter, has served as Senior Campaign Consultant with American City Bureau since July 2017. He and his wife, Nancy, live in Red Oak.

Helpful websites:

IRS: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/tax-exempt-organization-search>

Guidestar (formerly known as Candid): <https://www.guidestar.org>

Charity Watch: <https://www.charitywatch.org>

ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer: <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/>

BBB Wise Giving Alliance: <https://give.org>

Great Nonprofits: <https://greatnonprofits.org>

Minimum Required Distribution: A Valuable Option for Charitable Giving

By Robert Warnock



*"Smart Giving: Use an IRA required minimum distribution to support causes you believe in."
- The Community Foundation*

Many of us YMCA Alumni have Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) in addition to our YMCA Retirement Funds. These may be from times when we were employed outside the YMCA or perhaps inherited from our parents. We are required by law to take a minimum distribution from most IRAs once we reach the age of 73. These Minimum Required Distributions (MRDs) are taxed as ordinary income for the year they are taken.

Making gifts each year to our favorite charities is important to so many of us. It can be especially so if you do not itemize deductions on your annual tax return. Even if you do, you may benefit from gifting all or part of your MRD to qualified charitable organizations rather than writing checks. Amounts gifted from MRDs in this way are exempt from income tax. You will want to consult with your financial advisor and your tax preparer in doing this, but here are some things to consider:

MRDs must be gifted to a qualified charity before they are distributed to you. This is done by transferring money directly from your IRA to a charity before the end of the year, using a method similar to gifting appreciated securities.

Your financial advisor can tell you what your MRD will be for the current year. It is based upon the balance in your IRA at the end of the previous year. Tax-exempt transfers to charities can be made anytime during the current year, but must be completed before the year's end.

MRD charitable transfers are not deductible as charitable contributions. This would be "double dipping" and would be frowned upon by the IRS should you be audited. The benefit to you is in the saving of income tax that you would have to pay if you took the distribution yourself. If you don't itemize your tax return, it's an easy choice.

If you itemize, you will need to decide which option benefits you more: avoiding income tax by transferring MRDs to charity or writing a check to that charity and taking the tax deduction. If you itemize, you are likely using the services of a tax firm that can help you make this decision.

Note that inherited IRAs are eligible, but Roth IRAs are not. Furthermore, our Y Retirement funds are taken as annuities and are therefore not eligible.

My wife Monica and I have been doing our best to gift as much of our annual MRDs as possible to our charitable causes since we learned of this option. Tax deductions are not the primary reason we give to charity, and we prefer not to pay income taxes if we can avoid it. Consider giving thoughtful consideration to doing the same.

BOB WARNOCK is President of the YMCA Alumni Lyon Chapter and YMCA Alumni liaison to the YMCA Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF).

Twists and Turns of the Last Big Move

By Norris Lineweaver

“Home is where the heart is, even if you can't remember which box you packed it in.” – Anonymous



Retirement is a significant life transition that many of us experience in the second half of life. Our YMCA Retirement Fund has kept the score competitive despite uncertainty and uncharted waters.

Before returning home from our final assignment in Jerusalem 16 years ago, we set goals for our lives beyond 60. We built our dream shoreline residence on our “golden pond” in Ontario, Canada, and had already designed our primary home in Indiana to be fully accessible to age in place.

Then at 76, I went airborne without a parachute on a switchback trail down to the dock and made a not-so-graceful three-point landing on the stairwell. In an instant, our lives were changed. We realized we needed to consider a new lifestyle to age with dignity.

Preparation and financial planning with advisors during our mid-life years helped us with options on quality aging. Visiting life plan communities in Indiana helped us shape relevant questions. The most urgent and consistent question we asked ourselves was: “Are we ready?”

Then, in October 2023, our daughter told us that she and our granddaughter had decided to move to Asheville, NC, from Indianapolis before the end of the year. We knew this was simmering, and we were not totally surprised.

We offered to enroll all of us in the Thanksgiving Family Retreat hosted at the Blue Ridge YMCA Assembly at Black Mountain. It turned out to be a fun and productive event for our family.

While there, MaLes and I kicked the tires at the area “life plan communities.” We discovered Givens Estates, just a 15-minute drive from our daughter’s new home. We put a deposit down at Givens to be placed on a five- to seven-year waiting list. When asked if we were ready, we were prepared to answer without hesitation: “Yes, we are ready.”

A “life plan community,” also known as a “continuing care retirement community (CCRC),” is a senior living community that provides a range of housing options and healthcare services on a single campus.

We returned to Indianapolis to place our homes on the market. Once Givens Estates heard we were selling our homes, they called a month later to make an offer. If we were willing to move twice, we could move into temporary quarters on campus, with the trade-off of being placed on a one- to two-year wait list. We signed the offer without hesitation before selling our real estate properties in Indiana and Ontario.

We knew at the time that waiting lists were the norm at high-quality communities of this type. Here at Givens Estates, there are currently 1,500 prospective residents on the wait list.

A buyer met our asking price for our home in Indianapolis, which we had owned for more than 20 years. We began downsizing for a relocation to a temporary villa in Asheville, realizing our “golden pond” shoreline home would eventually enter the market as well.

After settling into small quarters for a couple of months, we decided to relocate again to our shoreline retreat in Ontario. We had alerted our immediate neighbors there that we were preparing to put our house up for sale.

One neighbor paid cash for our boat and then let us use it until we departed. Another neighbor expressed interest in our adjoining backlands, and we made a verbal agreement before we sold. The neighbor later asked to buy all our property before engaging real estate agents. We closed on “golden pond” by the end of the summer.

Then, of course, Asheville was hit by the storm of the century, knocking out power and water, causing extensive damage, and blocking access to the city. The nearby YMCA, Blue Ridge Assembly, was devastated. So, the twists and turns continued.

Moving to a life plan community at age 80 can be both liberating and complex – emotionally, logistically, and financially. It is a major transition that often brings unexpected challenges and rewards.

Letting go of the family home through downsizing can stir up grief, nostalgia, and anxiety. Fear of the unknown, what it means to trade off home ownership for a secure residential community where everything is provided, is a huge leap of faith. Then there is the identity transition when the shift occurs for us as career YMCA leaders from being the servant leader to becoming one being served.

Learning the new culture of a life plan community takes time and patience. Our best advice is to take time to learn about the culture and develop new friends before immediately diving into volunteering. As retired YMCA leaders, we are live bait for the early rush of committees searching for new talent.

The financial considerations are very significant, but when you assess the total costs of staying where you are, you will likely find that the trade-off may be net even. Our financial advisors were most helpful, and the benefits of the YMCA Retirement Fund served as the cornerstone of our planning.

As I finished writing this story, we unpacked the last of our boxes. We experienced profound relief. One box contained the carefully packed, mended blue vase from Tsingtao, China. The vase was shattered in China and mended by craftsmen, piece by piece, held together by embedded metal pins.

I was four years old at the time, and when it was entrusted to my care much later in life, I surmised I was the culprit. Along with 45 pieces of wall art, family photos, and 15 stained glass window hangings, our new permanent home in Asheville tells the story of our adventure and joy.

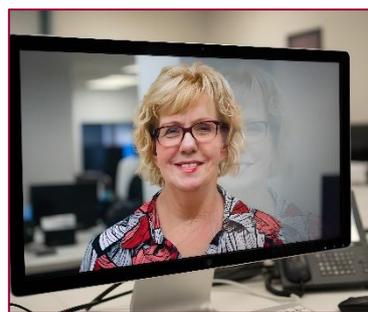
Many of you, no doubt, have your own story to tell of that last big move.

NORRIS LINEWEAVER has served local and national YMCAs at home and abroad for 42 years, with notable assignments including CEO of the Indianapolis, IN YMCA and Director General of the Jerusalem International YMCA. He co-founded Friends of Jerusalem International YMCA, which has raised and distributed more than \$5 million to date for the Y. He is the former Chair of the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (WFYR). He has contributed numerous times to the original Perspective Magazine and to YMCA Alumni newsletters and publications. Norris and MaLes have been married for 53 years.

You Are Your Personal 'Controller' in Retirement

By Dianne Clark

"Retirement is when you stop working to live and start living fully." – Author Ernie J. Zelinski



When we began our careers with the YMCA, we actually took the first step toward a successful retirement. I worked for the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati long enough to remember when we received 12-14 percent interest on our savings.

I served as the Y's controller for more than two decades. But when I retired, like all of us, I became my husband's and my personal "controller." Here are some financial considerations to keep in mind for our own retirement once the daily commute to the Y ends. You will find these tips helpful if you are new to retirement, but those who have been retired for a while may find a review worthwhile as well.

It's never too late to identify your sources of income that will help you create a realistic estimate of where you are on a day-to-day basis. Start with your annuity from Y Retirement. Figure in Social Security, 401K, or IRA income from your spouse or from another career. Are there other savings and investments? Perhaps you are still working part-time or in a so-called "second career."

Most professional financial advisors recommend waiting until you are 70 to begin withdrawing Social Security, but that's really a personal decision. Keep in mind that if you are working part-time or full-time and collecting Social Security, there is a government threshold of wages before you will be penalized.

Consider spending habits. That way, a realistic retirement budget can be built.

There are essential costs, including housing, utilities, food, insurance, and healthcare. Discretionary spending, such as travel, hobbies, and entertainment, is a big part of our retirement years. Savings and investments for the future remain essential.

It's always a good idea to consult with a tax professional and/or financial advisor to minimize surprises. Perhaps scheduling an annual session with a financial advisor makes sense.

Enroll in Medicare as soon as you qualify. Meet with a healthcare insurance agent to determine which plan is best for you and your health conditions. They will ask about your current healthcare issues, including any chronic conditions and medications you are taking. It's a good idea to get a recommendation on an agent from someone already enrolled in Medicare.

Review and update your legal documents. This would include wills and trusts, beneficiary designations, power of attorney, and healthcare directives. One of the things my husband and I are currently considering is downsizing. We live in a four-bedroom home on about two acres. We certainly don't need something that large today.

As we age, we often find it increasingly difficult to keep up with household chores and yard work. We've been fortunate to have help from our children and grandchildren on some of our larger projects. We plan to sell our current home and find a small ranch or condo. We hope to pay cash for our new home, leaving enough extra money over to add to our emergency and travel funds.

Lastly, as our own controller, getting involved and staying involved is really important. This might mean volunteering for a cause you want to support or joining a group for an activity you enjoy. It's crucial to get out and not sit at home.

Of course, I'm going to suggest getting more involved with YMCA Alumni. Join your chapter and attend their outings and reunions. I've found that most YMCA Alumni members have a heart for service and are fun, kind individuals. There are numerous opportunities and causes within our organization for volunteering and socializing.

Some of these suggestions may seem obvious. But that doesn't mean we pay them as much attention as we should. We are our own "controller" now, and intentionally "controlling" our retirement years means making them more enjoyable and comfortable.

DIANNE CLARK, a member of the Chambers YMCA Alumni Chapter and Treasurer of National YMCA Alumni, began working at the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati in 1974, typing purchase orders. Over the years, she continued her education and training. She became the Y's Controller and served in that role for 20 years, retiring in 2017. During her tenure, she helped select computer systems and implemented the EFT payment system. She served as the church treasurer for more than 12 years. Dianne and her husband, Randy, have been married for nearly 50 years and have two daughters, five grandsons, and a great-granddaughter.

New Survey Shows We're Enjoying Retirement

By Carmelita Gallo



"Retire from work, but not from life." – M.K. Soni

We're happy. That's the bottom line from a recent survey, in which 162 randomly selected members of Y Retirement (formerly known as YMCA Retirement Fund) responded.

My role as the Retiree Liaison to Y Retirement calls for helping to educate trustees about YMCA retirees' experience and sharing summaries of board meetings with retirees. I shared the results of this year's annual survey with the trustees, and I'm pleased to share them with you in Perspective. Of the respondents, 88 percent are fully retired, and the remaining 12 percent either work full-time or part-time.

We asked: "Are you enjoying your retirement all or most of the time, only sometimes, or none of the time?" 93 percent responded, "all or most of the time." Only 6 percent answered "sometimes" and 1 percent said "none of the time."

Why didn't that 7 percent select the "all or most of the time?" we asked. The top 5 reasons selected were: financial pressure, 45 percent; boredom, 45 percent; isolation, 36 percent; personal health issues, 27 percent; and health issues involving a loved one, 18 percent.

Some of the comments accompanying financial pressures focused on rising food and medical costs, house repairs, and the unpredictability of inflation and taxes. Others expressed concerns about the current administration's economic policies.

Many said boredom and isolation, along with the lack of a daily structure, made it more difficult to be active and to engage with others. Some noted they were grateful to live near family, especially grandchildren, although they miss the fellowship they shared with their colleagues that they took for granted.

Concerns about health centered on the frequency of doctor visits, the cost of health insurance and prescription drugs, as well as surgeries, special therapies, and treatments. Several noted the loss of a spouse as the main reason for boredom and isolation.

Despite the many challenges faced by those responding to the survey, 75 percent strongly agree or agree that they feel comfortable in retirement, and 81 percent strongly agree or agree that their retirement annuity checks support most of the activities they enjoy.

Comments ranged from appreciating Y Retirement planning workshops that really helped make retirement predictable and enjoyable to acknowledging that annuity checks arrive on time without fail.

There was complete agreement with this statement when it comes to advising younger YMCA professionals: "Y Retirement is reliable, fantastic, and trustworthy. Start a 403b savings account, save the maximum amount you can afford each year, and let it grow!"

CAREMLITA GALLO is a member of the Schreiner and Hoosier-Buell chapters and also serves as the West Region VP on the YMCA Alumni Board. She retired in 2017 from the YMCA of Metro Dallas where she served as SVP/COO. Prior to that, she was Director of Association Resources at YUSA after serving 19 years in several positions at the YMCA of Metro Chicago where she began her career as a Day Camp Counselor. She is currently the Retiree Liaison to the Y Retirement Board of Trustees and a member of the YMCA of the Seven Council Fires Board of Trustees.

‘When You Wish Upon A Star’ Funding Our National Project

By Gary Graham

*“If your heart is in your dream, no request is too extreme.
When you wish upon a star, as dreamers do.” – Jiminy Cricket*



“I can’t wait to ask.”

I uttered those words that sealed the deal after listening to the plans to build four tiny homes and a small Y branch to be known as a “twig” on the Cheyenne River Reservation.

I had joined an early-on Standing Committee Zoom meeting as the replacement representative of my Central Atlantic chapter at the late Mike Graves’ request. Within days, I was the fundraising chair of the first YMCA Alumni National Service Project.

My wife Bonnie and I had already enjoyed a week’s service project at the YMCA’s 50-year-old Camp Marrowbone.

But this was different. We had received donations from the members of the Standing Committee, who contributed a very encouraging \$34,000, but nothing more. Further, we literally had no idea what the ultimate cost of the project would be.

To make matters more tenuous, no sane fundraising professional thought we could raise more than a couple of hundred thousand dollars at best. We had no prospect of a lead gift. We had no prospect list other than a relatively small group of us “old people,” also known as YMCA Alumni. We had set a goal of \$100,000, which we were reasonably sure would cover the costs of one prototype tiny home.

Flying a bit blind has never bothered me much. I said “yes” to the invitation to chair the fundraising effort.

A YMCA truism most of us are familiar with from our careers came into play: “The shortest distance between two points flows through a committee.” We adapted the 17-chapter structure of YMCA Alumni to create 17 mini-campaigns within a single campaign.

The fully committed larger chapters raised up to \$70,000. Even better, all chapters, even the smallest, raised something. And all used the time-tested approach of a committed fundraiser speaking with a single prospect.

The individual “ask” proved to be the key.

One of the most intriguing and unexpected benefits was the number and amount of gifts raised from people who were neither Y retirees nor YMCAs. \$160,000 of our final total was raised from individuals who were not previously directly engaged with us or the YMCA.

We adopted the group work maxim that everyone has a role to play, and we uncovered multiple high performers in unlikely places. Our weekly Zoom calls were rife with surprises (probably not the best fundraising strategy). We began to see eye-opening results as the energy ramped up higher each week.

Every time we got close during the three fundraising years, we upped the goal. We were able to do things we hadn’t initially planned, such as furnishing each of the homes and much more.

We raised more than \$1 million by the formal end of the campaign. The money continues to flow in as a result of the inspiration fostered by the National Service Project Celebration ceremony and related internal and external media coverage.

All this raises questions: What comes next? The first foray into an enterprise is unknown territory. We have never done something as extraordinary as this before.

The novelty of the first YMCA Alumni National Service Project has a special impact. We need to establish a uniqueness for the next one that, if it doesn't match the first project, approaches it. The criteria used to select that project will likely help reach the standard we set for the first: "challenging, achievable, sustainable, impactful, have donor appeal, and fostering of involvement."

The project by its very nature fosters dual loyalty. The clear priority for many of us is enhancing and expanding the YMCA Alumni experience and engagement. And, if the project is compelling, some people will be more aligned with the Y or the beneficiary. This is inevitable and needs to be recognized.

Direct service is not for everyone, so continuing to find roles that support the members and friends who cannot or do not want to go to the physical site will expand the potential for broader fundraising and engagement. Non-YMCA Alumni volunteers are an expansion and public relations resource that, in the next iteration, needs to be intentional rather than lucky.

We were able to bring in college students, church groups, and Habitat for Humanity enthusiasts through chance contacts that need to be solidified, expanded, and made intentional for the future.

Time will tell whether this first experience will yield multiple successful and significant service projects. Another generation of retirees can fill the ranks of a new project and be its supporters. Chapter-level organization will remain essential, and if non-chapter-affiliated YMCA retirees emerge, they must be engaged to foster further involvement.

The entire endeavor was one of the most rewarding experiences in which I have ever been involved.

"Like a bolt out of the blue, fate steps in and sees you through.

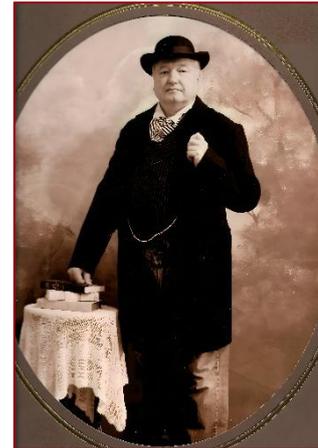
When you wish upon a star, your dreams come true."

GARY GRAHAM, a member of the Central Atlantic YMCA Alumni Chapter, retired after serving YMCAs professionally for 56 years in numerous executive capacities. He holds a Master of Arts in Religion and Theology from Yale Divinity School. His last position in the YMCA was as Director of the New Jersey YMCA Alliance.

My Perspective: It's All About Those Assets

By Bob Hastedt

“Leave your children enough that they can do anything, but not enough that they can do nothing.” – Warren Buffett



I spent 35 years working for the YMCA Retirement Fund, trying to convince people to save for the future. Ultimately, each of us reaches a point in our lives when we can stop saving and start thinking about how to give everything away.

This has become part of my life, as I have spent the last year serving as the executor of my dad's estate. One of the first things we need to consider is what we will enjoy more. Will it be better to leave my assets away after my death, or will I enjoy it more giving them away while I'm still alive?

Assets get value in a variety of ways. Naturally, the first way we see value is in assets with financial value. These include bank accounts, investment accounts, insurance policies, and other assets that have no value beyond their financial worth.

If you choose to, you can give up to \$19,000 this year to an individual before you have to worry about gift tax implications. If you are married, both of you can give that amount to an individual for a total of \$38,000. This applies to as many people as you choose. If you have two married children who have two children apiece, you and your spouse could give away \$228,000 (6 people at \$38,000) before having to worry about gift tax implications.

If you choose to leave financial assets at your death, you can leave as much as you want to your spouse and charities without having to worry about estate taxes. If you leave assets to anyone else, you can leave up to \$13.99 million before you have to worry about estate tax implications.

To do this, make sure you have a will that outlines how you want your assets distributed. You should also have a Power of Attorney (which allows someone to act for you) and a Health Care Proxy (sometimes referred to as a Medical Power of Attorney). This designates someone to make medical decisions on your behalf. The best thing you can do for those who take on these responsibilities is to spend an hour or so, every once in a while, organizing your papers. As much as you think you need your tax returns from the 1960s, you don't, so weed things out.

You will also have assets that have sentimental value. These are things that may have personal value but have no financial value. These may be family treasures, recognitions, and other items that you may have created.

Once again, if you want, give them away while you're alive so you can see others enjoy them. Just remember, something that has value to you may not have value to someone else. My Dad always valued his father's pocket watch. It doesn't work, and my grandfather passed away before I was born. It doesn't have the same value to me. Dad wants me to pass it on to my nephew. It will have even less value to him.

You will also have assets that have use value. This includes everything from your home to your Christmas decorations. For example, I have tons of DVDs that I can watch over and over.

These are assets that bring us joy. They make our lives fun. Use them to enjoy your life. Realize that there may not be anyone else who will care for them as much as you do.

Use your assets to enjoy your retirement. Use them to bring joy and enjoyment to yourself and those you cherish. Try to plan enough so they can fulfill your wishes without it taking over their lives. That will be the best thing you can leave them.

BOB HASTEDT worked 35 years as a Certified Financial Planner for the YMCA Retirement Fund (now known as Y Retirement). Since retiring, he has served as the Treasurer of the YMCA Alumni National Board. He is currently the Treasurer of the McBurney-Morse chapter and of his Lutheran congregation. He's also finishing up as the executor of his father's estate.

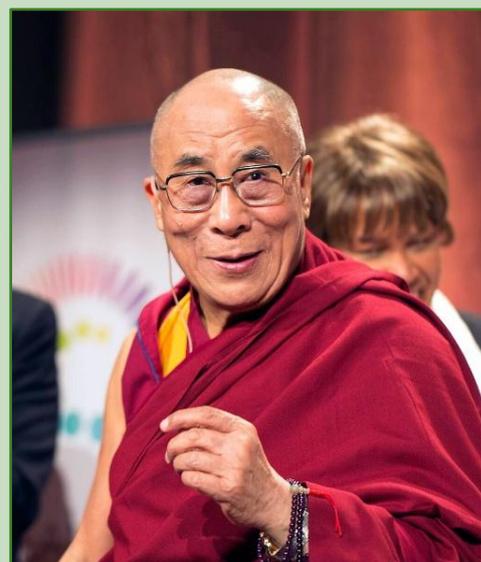
PERSPECTIVE FEBRUARY 2026

“Choose to be optimistic. It feels better.” –The Dalai Lama

A glass-half-full attitude might pay huge dividends — a lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease and other chronic ailments — including a longer life.

In an article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), researchers found that highly optimistic participants were much less likely to suffer from heart attacks or other cardiovascular events, and had a lower mortality rate than their pessimistic counterparts.

Another research article, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), indicates that people with higher levels of optimism lived longer. Optimistic women had a 50 percent greater chance of reaching age 85, and optimistic men had a 70 percent greater chance. As the Dalai Lama said, “*Choose to be optimistic. It feels better.*” –The Kiplinger Report



SPRING: April 2026: Making the Right Travel Choices

SUMMER: August 2026: Serve – So Many Ways

FALL: December 2026: Hobbies for Fun and Profit

WINTER: February 2027: Y Retirees Across The Globe: Their Stories

COMING UP IN PERSPECTIVE!

Would you like to write for Perspective on any of these subjects? Please send a query note to Managing Editor Peggi Simmons (peggisimmons@icloud.com) summarizing your story concept. She will acknowledge your query. Please don't write it until your story idea is accepted.

YMCA Alumni President: Phill Morgan

Production: craig altschul + associates (ca+a)

Editor: Craig Altschul (caltschul@icloud.com)

Managing Editor: Peggi Simmons (peggisimmons@icloud.com)

Graphic Design: Khayyam Akhtar

Editorial Advisor: Phil Wortman

YMCA Alumni, P.O. Box 621, Bowling Green, OH 43402