

# ymca ALUMNI connect·travel·serve

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# Sandpaper

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August 2026 Volume 88 Issue 3

**NORTHBROOK, ILL., May 7, 2026** — The Allstate Foundation announced a first-of-its-kind **\$15 million grant** making effort that builds on its long-standing commitment to youth empowerment by bringing together seven of the country's largest youth-serving organizations to increase youth-led service across the country. This marks the first time these organizations will collaborate as a structured coalition.

**Kate Nack, Vice President of The Allstate Foundation and Social Impact:** "This investment reflects The Allstate Foundation's long-standing belief that service is a powerful developmental tool for young people to build career readiness, connection and resilience.. That's why The Allstate Foundation is investing in youth-serving organizations to help reach millions of young people with more opportunities to lead through service."

The Allstate Foundation will invest more than \$15 million in programming and grants over two years to support seven national youth-serving organizations. Participating organizations include:

- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Future Business Leaders of America
- Junior Achievement USA
- National 4-H Council
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National PTA
- YMCA of the USA

**Suzanne McCormick, President and CEO, YMCA of the USA:** "Every day in the Y, we see how youth-led service helps young people discover who they are and build confidence in what they can achieve. We also see how it strengthens the fabric of our communities by bringing people from all walks of life together to collaborate around a shared goal for the greater good. Our communities have so much to learn from our youngest citizens, and the country's 2,600 YMCAs are excited to partner with The Allstate Foundation and fellow youth-serving organizations to grow and enhance youth-led service in our country."

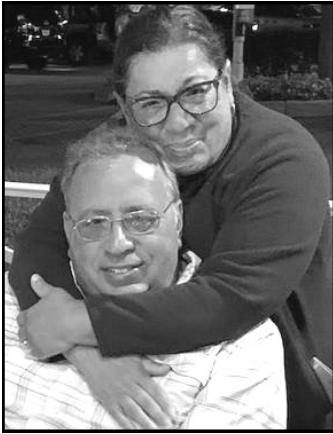
The funding focuses on expanding youth-led service opportunities. While many organizations already offer traditional service opportunities, this investment is designed to elevate those efforts by embedding youth-led service more intentionally into existing programs and systems. Grants will be used to:

- Expand youth-led service across programs, chapters and networks.
- Increase the number and quality of opportunities for young people to plan, lead and shape service efforts.
- Support organizational infrastructure that allows youth-led service practices to be sustained beyond the grant period.

To explore the full report, visit: [The Power of Youth Service. Empower youth to serve and improve communities](https://www.allstatefoundation.org) by using The Allstate Foundation's resources at [AllstateFoundation.org](https://www.AllstateFoundation.org).

# Co-Presidents' Message

Arlinda Quinones/Mike Santos



Summer Greeting friends, we miss you! It would be lovely to see you at the Just for Lunch at the Apollonia restaurant in Sarasota on October 5th. Thank you to **Dorothy Markell** and **Pat Frazier** for arranging the gathering.

Come and bring us your stories of what is happening in your lives these days.

Let's catch up with one another while enjoying good food, laughter and creating new memories. We hope to see you there, please RSVP to the link provided in the Sandpaper.

Congratulations to **Larry Garvin** who accepted the position of Eastern Y Alumni VP. He will be reaching out shortly on strategic plans to continue growing Y Alumni. Additionally, thank you Larry Garvin for representing the C.B. Willis Chapter at the 48 hours conference in St. Louis this year.

The chapter is still looking for volunteers to sit in on zoom meetings for the International Service Corp (ISC) to replace **Bob Martin** who is unable to continue with his representation. We thank Bob dearly for the wonderful work he did leading the group in various projects.

There are a lot of new projects being discussed in the ISC with Mexico City, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, and other locations worldwide.

We also need a chapter representative for the National Service Project (NSP). The NSP will be starting Phase Two of the building of the "Twig," the Y Center in South Dakota. Both of these incredible opportunities can be the same person and they mainly entail being in on the monthly or quarterly zoom meetings and reporting to the chapter.

Be on the look out for a message from **Phil Wortman**, to see how many of you would like to travel to the World Equestrian Center in Ocala for an overnight event that Larry Garvin will be setting up. We'd also like to plan a Just 4 Lunch in late fall in Daytona or Orlando, dates and location to be announced through the Sandpaper.

**UPDATED MEMBERSHIPS**

Did you just slip-up and forget to get on-line and re-new your membership this year? **Please do it now!**

# LETTING GO DOESN'T MEAN WALKING AWAY

Robert W. Kovacs, Contributing Member



YMCA careers take many shapes. Some people move through multiple associations, collecting titles and chasing the next challenge. Others, like me, spend decades rooted in one place, building programs, relationships, and culture from the inside out. My work was never about visibility; it was about contribution — the quiet kind that keeps an organization steady.

Retirement changes your schedule, but it doesn't change your wiring. After years in a mission-driven community, you don't simply flip a switch and disconnect. The idea of suddenly having endless free time can feel both exciting and overwhelming. Most of us look forward to the same things: time with family, relocating or downsizing, long-delayed travel, hobbies we set aside, trying new ones, or simply breathing after years of service. The choice is personal, and there is no single path — and no wrong one.

For me, letting go didn't feel like closing a chapter so much as setting down a familiar book. Not everyone chooses to pick it back up. Nearly half of Y retirees prefer not to stay connected at all, and that percentage continues to rise. Those who do reconnect wait a year or more. Both are valid choices.

For those who eventually wander back, the connection looks different than it once did. No roles. No responsibilities. No advice. Just presence, shared history, and the comfort of familiar faces. It's rarely about programs or policies. It's about walking into a lobby where someone still remembers your name. It's about catching up with a former coworker who knew you long before retirement reshaped your days. It's the ease of conversations that don't require explanation — simply being there.

What returning isn't, is stepping into the role of advisor or mentor. Experience only becomes guidance when someone asks for it. Otherwise, it can feel like interference, especially in a world where the new generation wants the freedom to write their own story. That tension isn't personal; it's generational.

So staying connected becomes something simpler: presence without pressure.

Sometimes that looks like sitting in the lobby with a cup of coffee. Other times it's a conversation that drifts from memories to everyday life. At times simply being a familiar face in a place that once felt like a second home.

The Y and the community doesn't disappear — it changes shape. It means allowing your relationship with the Y to evolve into something lighter, rooted in shared history rather than responsibility.

Whether you return often, occasionally, or not at all, the years you gave remain part of the story. And remember if you do go back, sometimes it's enough just to sit, to listen, to talk and to remember that letting go doesn't mean walking away

**ymcaalumni.org**  
*Check it out!*

## Keeping the C"

### Follower

William Lyon Phelps

Christianity is a personal religion. Leave dogma to those who enjoy it; the true Christian is simply one of Christ's followers. I cannot understand the nature of Infinite Energy; but I can follow Jesus Christ because we have the story of His life, actions and words.

I have more faith in the practical wisdom and knowledge of Jesus than I have in that of any statesman, soldier, or philosopher. He was the most independent and courageous individual of whom we have any record.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

*It is very important to maintain a column expressing the core Christian values of our organization's Mission Statement, and of the YMCA's founding purpose. If you would like to assist in providing a message for this column, please contact me.*

## Just 4 Lunch (J4L)

In your area ... a chance to get together! Join everyone at the **Apollonia Grill** on **Monday, October 5th at 12:00 Noon!**

It's located at 8235 Cooper Creek Blvd, University Park, FL 34204. You take the UTC exit off I-75 and head west, and basically it is right there. Our J4L was there last year.

Thanks to **Pat Frazier** and **Dorothy Markell** for setting everything up!! Email your RSVP to **patfrazier41@gmail.com** or **dmarkell174@gmail.com**.

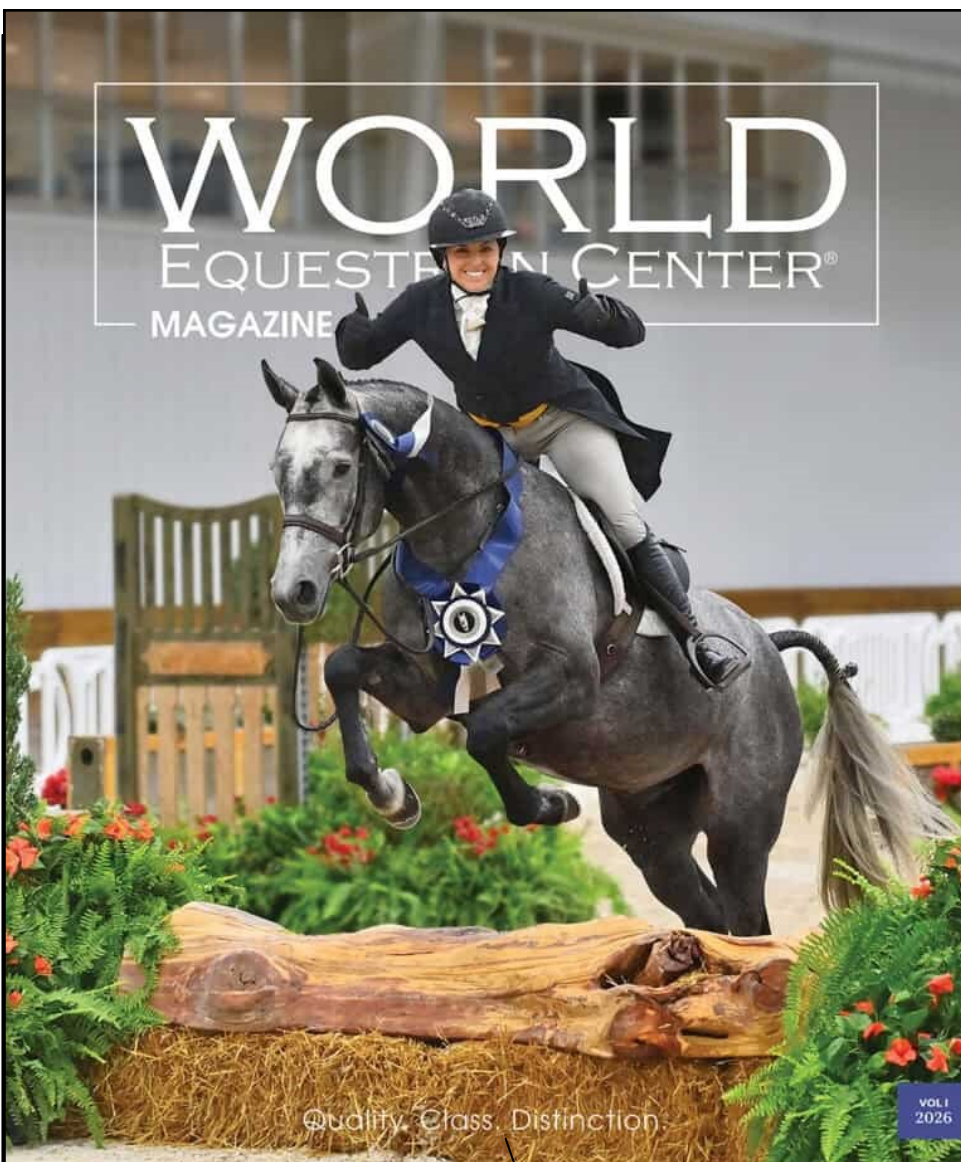
## A quickie

A woman phoned her husband at work. "I'm really sorry, honey," he told her, "but I don't have time to talk. I'm swamped!!"

She said, "This will only take a moment. I have some good news and bad news for you."

"Look," he said again, "I'm really busy! Just give me the good news and be quick about it."

"Well, here goes: the air bag works."



## We Need YOUR Input!

**Would you be interested in an overnight Willis Chapter meeting held at the World Equestrian Center in Ocala?**

What a great chance to get together for some fellowship with other Florida Y Alumni and tour the amazing **World Equestrian Center** named one of **TIME's 2024 World's Greatest Places** and recognized as a top destination to experience worldwide!

We are investigating possible dates for this Fall and discounts for possible lodging options. Here's our thoughts on an itinerary. The first day we can visit a "**Thoroughbred Ranch**" which we believe our group will find quite educational. BTW, the horses are **so** attractive.

The second day we will go to the "**World Equestrian Center**" ... trust me it is an awesome facility. The WEC (abbreviation) has plenty of rooms to have a Chapter Meeting and enjoy a meal.

Check it out on the web and then email, "**Yes! I would be interested in attending—please send me more information.**" Send your email to Phil Wortman at **wortmanii@aol.com**.



# ymca ALUMNI connect • travel • serve

The Florida Sandpaper  
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## YMCA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION MISSION

To provide opportunities for members to Connect, Travel, and Serve while nurturing a worldwide Christian fellowship.

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*The Florida Sandpaper* is the newsletter of the C. B. Willis Chapter of YMCA Alumni and is published six times a year.

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## Good Deeds Beget more Good Deeds

*Excerpts from an July 13, 2026 email from Lou Falk, NSP#1 Chairman to YMCA Alumni National Service Project Supporters.*

It has been almost a year since our waves of volunteers completed construction of the first four Tiny Homes in Dupree, South Dakota. All four homes have become occupied by single-parent families. Through the efforts of the YMCA these folks are learning the life skills needed to overcome multiple everyday obstacles and gaining the ability to successfully move back into the general population when their two-year rental agreements expire.

Good deeds beget more good deeds, and following a New York Times article about the Tiny Home Village that was published nationwide, an anonymous donor came forward to fund not only a solar energy system for each of the four Tiny Homes built by YMCA Alumni, but also funds for a *FIFTH* home which is being constructed by the YMCA! How great is that?!

This brings us to the final phase of the National Service Project - the Twig - a small YMCA Program Branch in the remote town of La Plant. We are actively recruiting volunteers to help build this structure utilizing the shipping containers that we used for storage in our Tiny Home Village. This will be completed by the end of September.

At the request of the YMCA, a small area has been added to the Twig's original plan to provide living quarters for a YMCA staff person. This late addition, plus the rising costs of building materials, makes it a challenge to stay within our budget for the National Service Project.

If you would like to help us manage this challenge, please go to YMCA Alumni National Service Project Credit Card Donor Form, or send me an email. But no matter what, I promise this final phase will be completed! Again, thank you so much for your support.

Lou Falk, Chairman, NSP