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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY TODAY AND TOMORROW

Assessing Community Needs: Implications for Strategic Planning and Expansion of Services

Summary Report for the Greensburg YMCA
Fall 2014 – Winter 2015

At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Both nationally and locally, the Y has listened and responded to communities' most critical social needs for multiple generations. The most compelling community needs coupled with the desired impact the Y seeks to have in their community is at the crux of what drives a Y's strategic expansion and program development plans.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General Conclusions

The research provides significant implications for current and future planning to meet the critical needs identified by the communities served by the Greensburg YMCA. Below are the key conclusions drawn from the responses to the online survey, focus groups and community leader forum:

1. The top identified community needs match up well with the Y's cause of strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.
2. The community welcomes Y programs that address the identified community needs.
3. The Y was encouraged to be a strategic partner and convener to address and support community issues related to youth/teens, families and older adults.
4. There is a deficit of affordable programs aimed at engaging, supporting and strengthening families.
5. Critical elements of a safe and secure place for youth/teens and older adults are identified.
6. The perception of the Y is limited.

Mixed Method Research Approach

The Greensburg YMCA utilized the services of the YMCA of the USA to conduct a thorough study of the needs of the communities served by the Greensburg YMCA. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in order to generate a near complete picture the community's thoughts about the Y and the needs that it could be serving within the community.

> On-Line Survey: August - October 2014

This survey instrument was distributed online through a multitude of channels with 258 responses received. This response level equates to a 95% confidence level and a confidence interval of 6.1%. Questions were asked regarding the two segments of the population that Ys typically engage: Adults and Youth/Teens. Key areas represent both critical needs in the community and a higher level of dissatisfaction with what the community currently offers.

> Community Discussion Groups: January – February 2015

Eight (8) discussion groups were conducted to delve deeper into the critical needs identified in the on-line survey. Individual target segments included: Youth/Teens (2); Families (3); and Older Adults (3). The questions were open-ended and participants were encouraged to consider all opportunities throughout the Greensburg area.

> Community Leaders' Forum: February 20, 2015

A total of 33 key community leaders were gathered to discuss and provide input for the Y as they seek to validate the most critical community needs and gather input for possible solutions. Five questions were addressed in small discussion group format. One question addressed the pressing problems facing the community. Three questions asked how the Y could be part of the solution to: strengthen the community; help adults and youth/teens practice healthy habits; and bring families together enabling them to learn, grow and thrive. The last question focused on the community's perception of the Y.

All of the data gathered from these three processes will provide critical information for the Y Board of Directors and staff leaders as they develop the Y's strategic plan and roadmap.

Research Findings

> On-line Survey

TOP COMMUNITY NEEDS - Results for Questions Relating to <i>Adults</i>	% Identifying Topic as Community Need*
Adults are supported in <i>practicing positive habits that include physical activity & healthy eating.</i>	29%
Availability of services aimed at <i>engaging the entire family unit.</i>	29%
Adults have <i>convenient access to structured activities</i> in a community facility.	22%
Availability of <i>learning opportunities</i> for adults	22%
Presence of <i>community spaces where adults can develop connections with others</i>	21%

TOP COMMUNITY NEEDS - Results for Questions Relating to <i>Youth and Teens</i>	% Identifying Topic as Community Need*
<i>Safe and secure</i> community spaces for our youth.	39%
Presence of community spaces where youth can <i>develop connections with others.</i>	39%
Availability of non-athletic programs that draw out youth skills, creativity and confidence	38%
Children enter into kindergarten prepared for success	37%
Youth are supported in <i>practicing positive habits that include physical activity & healthy eating</i>	35%

*Percentages shown = % of Respondents identifying topic as 'Very Important' x % of Very Important Respondents who are Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied with this topic

> **Community Focus Groups**

Four key areas were explored:

- a. **Support for adults and youth to practice positive habits that include physical activity and healthy eating**
- b. **Availability of services aimed at engaging the entire family unit**
- c. **Safe and secure community spaces for our youth**
- d. **Presence of safe community spaces where youth can develop connections with others**

TOP IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY NEEDS	COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GROUPS Common Sample Suggestions
<p>Support for adults and youth to practice positive habits that include physical activity and healthy eating</p>	<p>Healthy Eating and Well-Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools/PTA and Colleges – promoting healthy habits and programs • Y • Other health clubs • Weight Watchers • Library • Churches • Boy/Girl Scouts <p>Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynch Field, pool, track • Y • PSU extension • Hospital (programs, mall walkers) • Walking and biking trails (in the city and surrounding area) • Parks
<p>Positive habits including physical activity & healthy eating (<i>youth & teens</i>)</p>	<p>Healthy Eating and Well-Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating healthy • Positive attitude about self • Staying drug, alcohol free <p>Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise • Playing sports/participating on teams (swimming, basketball, hockey) • Outdoor activities (walking, biking, hiking, swimming; utilizing the Parks)

<p>Positive habits including physical activity & healthy eating (<i>families and older adults</i>)</p>	<p>Healthy Eating and Well-Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smarter food and drink choices • Exercise and sports • Positive mental attitude • Stress reduction • Having friends/making new friends/being with other people (do things together) <p>Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise/working out (Y, Aerobics Center, Lynch Field, other gyms) • Sports (playing and coaching) • Camping and hiking (families) • Biking/swimming/walking
<p>Services to engage the entire family (<i>family</i>)</p>	<p>Services and Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education and Community Service (classes, programs, library) ▪ Special Events (county fair, sporting events, concerts, day trips, camping, amusement parks, vacation) ▪ Physical Activity (hiking, walks, 5K & 10K runs, family sports, fitness classes, swimming) ▪ Indoor Activities (board games, hobbies, family eating together, Sky Jump Zone) <p>Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too busy • Not enough money/costs too high • Over engagement/not enough down time
<p>Safe and secure community spaces</p>	<p>Elements of Safe and Secure Space for Youth/Teens</p> <p>Youth responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drug-free ▪ Lots of people that you trust ▪ Lights everywhere ▪ Staff trained to handle emergency situations ▪ People greeting me upon arrival/entrance ▪ Emergency procedures posted/AEDs visible <p>Family responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background checks on staff/employees • Controlled access in and out • Reputation of organization • Adequate supervision • Visibility of staff (bright shirts) • Professional security/cameras <p>Older Adult responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean • Staffed and controlled entrance and exit (sign in/out; show ID to pick up youth) • Easily identified staff (same shirt, bright color)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying not allowed • Parents sign agreement indicating Code of Conduct, acceptance of responsibility) • Leaders, parents and youth/teens held accountable • Treat youth respectfully <p>Organizations that make you think of children and safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Y • School • Boy/Girl Scouts • Greensburg Rec. Sports • Church • Lynch Field Park • Youth sports programs • YWCA <p>As an Older Adult</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go with several people/friends • Have someone check on me daily • Knowing type of people that will be where I'm going • Staying away from places large groups of teens hang at • Having bathrooms, seating area and shade
<p>Develop connections with others</p>	<p>Youth/Teens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Church • Greensburg Rec • Extra-curricular activities (4H, Boy/Girl Scouts) • Sports/teams <p>Older Adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Y • Church • McKenna Center/Aerobics Center • Women's groups • Programs and meetings (sponsored by service clubs, PSU, church, library)
<p>Non-athletic programs to draw out creativity and confidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cub Scouts/Boy and Girl Scouts • Stage Right • Church • Library • Aren't many places

Community Leaders' Forum

DISCUSSION QUESTION	COMMUNITY LEADER FORUM Key Highlights
<p>Seeking Greater Community Impact:</p> <p>What are the critical social issues or pressing problems facing our community at this time? Over the next five years?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breakdown of families/lack of parental guidance/children raising themselves/decline in moral values ▪ Drugs – not just kids using anymore ▪ Aging population ▪ Mental health ▪ Poverty and homeless ▪ Need for education and increased skills for jobs/job growth/attracting industry
<p>Strengthening Community:</p> <p>How could the Y play a greater role in building the strength of our community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serve the aging population – bus seniors to Y; provide alternative activities; deliver programs and services to them; senior sports leagues ▪ Build self-worth in teens: mentoring; teen support; anti-bullying; leadership academy; ▪ Strategic partnership with schools, churches/youth groups, Boy/Girl Scouts, county jail ▪ Provide safe gathering place ▪ Wellness education – expand into community; take programs to employers/businesses; obesity education; address suicide prevention ▪ Provide activities for families; family sports; wellness education
<p>Living Healthier:</p> <p>In what ways could the Y help adults, youth and teens practice healthy habits that include physical activity and healthy living?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop partnerships with schools (nurses, guidance counselors), churches, hospitals, physicians, employers, health organizations, senior centers, drug court ▪ Model healthy living – increase access to healthy food (Farmer’s Market); Health Fair; host text-free environment; no unhealthy food in vending machines; ▪ Support Families – foster intergenerational activities; expand leagues through teens years; provide healthy living literature and resources; provide introductory classes to weight lifting, cardio; educate parents on diabetes prevention in children and adults; provide youth wellness education – nutrition, healthy choices; participate as a Y in Kids of Steel
<p>Bringing Families Together:</p> <p>One of the priorities of the Y is to help families, children and youth learn, grow and thrive. What could the Y do to be more effective in this area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage intergenerational programs – connect seniors with youth/mentoring program with grandparents; ▪ Extend child care (beyond 6pm, 3rd shift, earlier hours) ▪ Develop child care with employers/businesses ▪ Increase family programming at Y (scavenger hunts, 5K for families, specific nights at outdoor pool and field space at Lynch Field; family sports/programs) ▪ Provide education on life issues (cooking; cyber security; career education; healthy living) ▪ Partner with churches and schools (bring school nurses/guidance counselors to Y for educational tour) ▪ Hold more family style events; Family Nights ▪ Match college students with kids who don’t have family engagement ▪ Hold events for families that aren’t physically/sports oriented (Lego Building, Scavenger Hunt)

<p>Delivering on Our Mission:</p> <p>What is the community’s perception of our Y?</p> <p>What are the most impactful and effective programs and services currently offered by our Y?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facility – old, outdated, rundown, antiquated, not welcoming, no parking ▪ Place for kids (just for little kids); child care; not aware of other programs ▪ Affordability – too costly; above average cost ▪ Place to go for swimming and basketball ▪ Lack of awareness – “mish mash of things”; don’t have a perception of it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care/summer camp – most impactful/effective (9 responses) • Swimming (6) • School age child care (3)
<p>Closing:</p> <p>List the top community charities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ United Way – 10 responses ▪ Excelsior Health – 6 ▪ Westmoreland County Action – 5 ▪ Charities mentioned with 4 or less responses included: Seton Hill University, A Dance Society, American Heart Association, Food Bank, Community Foundation, Adelphoi Village, Mental Health Association, SBHS, Big Brothers/Sisters; Cultural Trust; Museum; St. Vincent; Community Foundation; Rotary Club; Boy Scouts; Salvation Army; Westmoreland Hospital; Diocese of Greensburg; Westmoreland Trust; Catholic Charities; Goodwill; churches. ▪ The Y - 2