



Monthly

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# Connections

YMCA OF CENTRAL KENTUCKY



## Good News, Better Stories for Board Members, Friends & Staff January 2012

YMCA Friends,

During my years of service with the Y, I have had the privilege of helping communities grow stronger thanks to the impact of the Y. Throughout our Y, there are stories of success, of transformation, of caring. We hold these stories, you and I, because of our shared commitment to our common cause: strengthening community.

A New Year means a blank canvas. It brings with it rich opportunities to take all that the Y is doing best and lift them up. The fresh beginning also allows us all an opportunity to reflect on where we can do better and begin again.

For children and youth throughout our area, 2012 will bring a chance to lead, grow and thrive like never before. For many

members (new and returning), the New Year brings with it a renewed commitment to health, well-being and vitality. For all of us, the New Year will bring chances to do even more good for more people and neighborhoods throughout the Bluegrass. It's something the Y does best.

As you are out and about in the community, remember to share success stories like the ones in this month's issue that promote the impact of giving back to help those in need.

This year I look forward to engaging with each of you on this journey.

Gail M. Glasser  
President and CEO



The YMCA of Central Kentucky's signature annual event, the Reindeer Ramble 5K Run/Walk was held in December at Keeneland. Focused on family, the event encouraged health, fitness and fun!

*Read more about the success of this year's event on page 5.*

## FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### Great Story from Beaumont Centre

While Lexington is known nationally and internationally for basketball and thoroughbred horse racing, Central Kentucky is quickly gaining a reputation in another sport: Fencing. When 17-year-old Lee Kiefer finished third in the Senior World Fencing Championships in October, she served notice that one of the world's best fencers lives right here in Lexington. Not to be outdone, her coach, Amgad Khazbak, is a coach for U.S. Fencing. He is also a fencing instructor at the YMCA of Central Kentucky.

Amgad's story began in Egypt where he began fencing at age 9. As he got older, Amgad wanted to teach fencing, but because of the popularity of fencing in Egypt, there were already many good coaches. In the U.S., however, there were ample opportunities and he found his home here in Kentucky.

"Without the YMCA, fencing wouldn't be successful in Lexington," Amgad says. "The High Street YMCA and Beaumont have provided a lot of participants and rooms to

practice in during the week. When the classes first started, the response was huge."

Among those participants was Lee Kiefer. Lee, whose father fenced at Duke, started fencing when she was just 7 years old. "I had taken classes in Louisville because that was the only place that offered fencing," Lee says, "so when it came to Lexington at the YMCA, I was really excited."

Lee advanced quickly and was the youngest member of the 2009 Senior World Team at the age of 15. She is currently ranked No. 1 in the U.S. and No. 6 in the world. Both she and Amgad are pointed to the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

While not every program at the Y produces Olympic athletes and coaches, we are proud that our programs can be the launching point for greatness in many forms. Golden opportunities are borne from the fundamental skills and core values learned through Y programs.



Coach Amgad Khazbak (left) and Lee Kiefer

## FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### Great Story from YMCA Black Achievers

While we love to tell our “Y stories”, no one tells them better than the actual participants. Here, Renee Miller shares her family’s experience with the YMCA Black Achievers program:

“The YMCA Black Achievers has been a great experience for my daughters, Lexus and Ataria Miller. The program allows them to be a in a safe, nurturing environment where they can gain positive exposure to caring and professional African American adults.

“The program prepares them mentally for a promising future. They have enjoyed the trips and community service projects they have been able to participate in.

“Lexus participated in the 2011 Spring Break College Tour where she was exposed to information and history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and history of African Americans when visiting the Civil Rights Museum in Birmingham, Ala., as well as Centennial Park. Both Lexus and Ataria

were participants in the Roots and Heritage Parade with other Black Achievers students reciting the Creed and marching for the program.



L-R: Lexus, Renee and Ataria Miller

Although both of my daughters are very active in extra curricular activities and haven’t been able to attend every session, Black Achievers has continued to be a positive influence. I am thankful to the Black Achievers program for offering great opportunities for my daughters and making it very affordable.”

-- Renee Miller

### Good News from Child Development

Both the Child Development Branch and the Jessamine County YMCA recently received \$5,000 grants from the JCPenney Afterschool Fund to help ensure that all children have access to high quality afterschool programs, regardless of their family’s income.

In keeping with its effort to inspire children to “spread their wings by making life-enriching afterschool programs accessible for working families,” JCPenney provides vital funding that allows the Y to help families who may not ordinarily qualify for assistance, but have extenuating circumstances.

“With all of the ways that our programs build strong kids and strong families, the

most important thing we do is give parents peace of mind and a partner during the extremely tough journey of parenthood,” said Kelly Easton, Executive Director of the Y’s Child Development Branch.

Families that don’t have to worry about where their child goes afterschool (and whether or not they can afford it) are families that are confident, empowered and connected. Financial assistance does so much more for a family than allow them to have discounted childcare. It can truly be the link that holds a family together, allowing parents to work or go to school and make sure they are building the best life possible for their kids.

## FOR HEALTHY LIVING

### Great Story from North Lexington

The habits of living a healthy lifestyle are best learned at a young age. But it's important to remember that, just like adults who hesitate to jump into exercise regimens because of uncertainty with the equipment or feeling out of a place in a group exercise class, children also sometimes need a nudge and some encouragement to clear that first hurdle of uncertainty.

Trevor Singleton, Senior Program Director at the North Lexington Family YMCA, shares this story of a young program participant:

"When Jacob came to PeeWee Sports the first class of the session, his mom told us that he was too shy and would hardly ever participate in activities. Sure enough, tears began rolling down his cheek when his mom tried to leave him at midcourt with the two coaches and the other kids.

"The others began their warm-ups, laughing and running. Jacob stood off to the side, and hesitantly, with Coach Tim's

encouragement, he came out to join the class with the others learning about kickball.

"Throughout class he was playing with the others, and stayed out on the court with them, but he kept his distance. At the end of class, when all the kids put their hands in and did the class cheer, he stood back, taking it all in. Coaches Katie and Tim told the class they would see them Wednesday for soccer, and Jacob took his mom's hand and went home.

"By the time class rolled around on Wednesday, Jacob came running into the Y, leading his mom and showing her to the gym. His mom told the coaches about how he wouldn't stop talking about playing sports, and talking about the coaches. She was extremely grateful for the patience the coaches showed Jacob and their persistence as well.

"Jacob finished out the session and his mother says that he is continuing in other situations to come out of his shell more and more."

### Good News from Jessamine County

During Winter Break, the Jessamine County Y provided an all day camp for 5-12 year-olds that focused on physical activity and healthy choices. The children were taught new gym games that got them up and moving ... being active without even feeling like they were "exercising."

A variety of healthy snacks were provided each day, including yogurt parfaits and vegetable trays. These snacks helped the kids get excited about trying new foods. The camp also took a field trip to Kids Place for more celebration of physical fitness and fun.



## FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### Great Story from Scott County

The Scott County YMCA held a free basketball clinic at Georgetown College, led by Georgetown College's men's basketball coach, Christopher Biggs. By making it a free clinic, many youth who otherwise might not have been able to afford such an experience were able to attend. In all, there were 46 participants.



Said one thankful father, "I appreciate this opportunity. It is always a challenge to keep my son busy during the winter."



### Good News from Community Services

One of the Y's 3 areas of focus is Social Responsibility, which is described as giving back and providing to our neighbors. Naturally, the Y's commitment to encouraging community volunteers and generating volunteer opportunities fits neatly under this focus area.

The Y has always been a volunteer-led organization and could not provide such a wide array of services and programs without the time, expertise and dedication of our volunteers. Volunteer opportunities range from homework help to coaching a youth sports team to helping a student with their college and career goals.

But the Y does more than provide volunteer opportunities. The Y staff also practices what they preach. In 2011 the staff volunteered at the VA hospital, homeless shelter, senior citizen center, and provided support for the military, community projects and local schools and churches.

The Y both accepts and provides volunteer help in order to strengthen our community.

### Good News from the Association

The Y's sixth annual Reindeer Ramble 5K Run/Walk was another huge success! This year's event, once again held at Keeneland, featured 1,350 participants, including a record 70 Santapede teams.

The event raised \$14,095, which will help the Y provide summer camp opportunities for everyone, regardless of ability to pay.

Y summer camp is an exciting, safe community for young people to explore the outdoors, build self-esteem, develop interpersonal skills and make lasting friendships and memories.

Thanks to our media partners and sponsors, as well as to all who participated, volunteered and supported this growing annual event. See you next year!