



April 2021

# BRIDGES

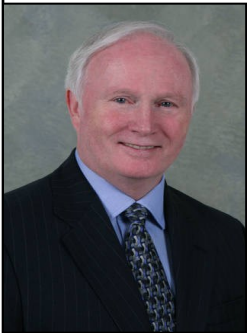
PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP OF YMCA RETIREES



## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." is the opening to Charles Dickens *The Tale of Two Cities*. This was certainly true of 2020. The "worst of times" resulted from the challenges faced by the world during the COVID 19

pandemic. The "best of times..." can be seen in the YMCAs efforts to serve those in need during this pandemic.



**World YMCA Emergency Assistance Fund for Staff and Retirees (Secours Speciaux)** is the signature charity for WFYR. 168,837 (chf) was donated from 2014 to 2019,

or an average annual gift(s) of 28,140 chf/year. Thirty-four individuals were given much needed financial grants and a message of love and remembrance for their years of YMCA service. In 2020, in response to the pandemic, donations were received from countries (USA, Germany, Canada, Great Britain and Australia) totaling 68,043 chf, a 142% increase. In addition, the World Brotherhood Fund donated 184,953 chf. One hundred five people, living in 20 different countries, were given humanitarian grants to help them through the pandemic.

**World YMCA Solidarity Fund** was created by Carlos Sanvee to help YMCA National Movements survive during the economic upheaval caused by the pandemic. 460 staff positions were aided, from 27 different YMCA movements, allowing those staff to continue serving their YMCA communities. Over 500,000 chf was raised to fund this effort. A Committee was created to oversee the allocation of these grants comprised of members of the World YMCA Executive Committee. However, in recognition of WFYR's role within the YMCA movement, I was asked to serve on this group.

**International YMCA Partnerships** continued. Despite the economic disruption, local YMCAs maintained their support to their international partnerships, providing much needed funding to maintain important community services. It might be natural to focus all financial resources on serving your local community. However, YMCA movements around the world realized the importance of the

"internationality" of the YMCA and continued funding these services to the best of their ability.

The "worst of times..." that called out the better angels of YMCA service was caused by a world pandemic (COVID 19) and 120,000,000 people (as of this writing) contracted the disease resulting in 2,650,000 deaths. This also resulted in massive economic disruption creating unemployment and a loss of business, that will take several years to recover from. The toll on mental health was immeasurable.

**COVID-19 Vaccines.** However, the world scientific community worked non-stop and within a few months created four different vaccines that are beginning to be administered around the world. This is another opportunity for the YMCA to help. As of mid-March 350 million doses have been administered worldwide.

However, there is a huge gap between vaccination programs in different countries with some yet to receive a single dose. Among the countries that have administered over 10 million doses are the United States, United Kingdom, Turkey, Israel, Brazil, Mainland China, India. YMCAs should lead efforts around the world to educate and advocate for the importance of this vaccination. However, in my view, they should go a further step. The YMCA should lend its voice, and organizing ability, to ensure the equitable distribution of vaccines to marginalized citizens around the world. We can partner with the World Health Organization and local health providers and create mass vaccination centers. We can advocate that the developed countries share a portion of their vaccines with other countries. The pandemic does not recognize borders, thus until the world is safe from COVID-19, no one is safe.

The pandemic brought out the "better angels" in all of us through individual and collective service to others, thus creating the best of times, which allowed the world to survive the worst of times.

*Phil Dwyer*  
**WFYR Chair**



# BRIDGES



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(If we missed your group or erred, please let us know.)

## THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITORS

Your editors have both received their second vaccine doses (jabs) but are still practicing social distancing and masking whenever we leave our shore home where we have stayed safely isolated for the entire winter. We are looking forward to the time when our “younger” friends and family are safe and within familiar “hugging” distance.

This edition of *Bridges* reflects a growing optimism in some parts of our “retiree” world with a sobering realism of just how far we have to go to return to what is being termed as the “new normal.”

Although retiree activities at the local level have been curtailed, the emergence of “ZOOM” has enabled new ways to stay in touch and keep informed of events impacting Y retirees worldwide. The edition enables our readers to meet new retiree leadership in the USA and Canada.

It is encouraging to learn how the worldwide YMCA is responding to the pandemic as local Ys shift from member to community and especially heartwarming to learn how WFYR leaders are involved in providing financial aid to retirees and active Y leaders in severe distress due to impact of the pandemic.

**Chairman Phil** stresses how we all must become “better angels” as we mobilize to bring resources to those still in peril around the world. Graham Clarke and Phil both stress urgency to bring vaccines to all parts of our world and when better times reappear, we must recognize and improve benefits for our frontline workers.

Our local retiree chapter recently conducted an on-line raffle that raised over \$3,000 targeted to ease the plight of our native American residents served by the Sioux Indian YMCA. Those funds were channeled through YUSA’s World Service programming which has been actively engaged in combatting the pandemic and political upheaval.

Hopefully, the pandemic is showing us the need to become better angels as the new normal develops.

*Len and Joyce Wilson*

Please send photos or articles to Len Wilson:

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## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### To Jerusalem onPrinciple

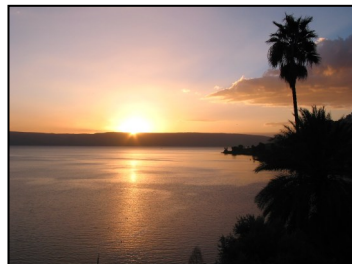
*Special report from Norris Lineweaver,  
WFYR Past Chairman*

Just imagine, early in your career, before you turned 40, your CEO called to say you were selected to join an elite group of peers from around the nation to dive into the question: what does it mean to put Christian principles into practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And then you realize it includes an immersion experience to witness first hand the work of the YMCA on both sides of the wall in The Holy Land.

Eager anticipation becomes reality when you join 11 other peers accompanied by mentors and experienced guides to step into the grand lobby of the Jerusalem International YMCA for a breathtaking moment to begin your once in a lifetime journey. Rising early the following morning, you are in the chapel underneath the Tower of Jesus at the Y to hear the first of twelve chapel talks by **Dr. David Newman** of Countryside YMCA in Lebanon, Ohio. He has themed his chapel talks on "Twelve Stones" focusing on iconic venues in The Holy Land.

As the onPrinciple leadership team journeys from Jerusalem to Galilee, the Ninth Stone is the lesson at Peniel, the YMCA Christian retreat center on the shores of Galilee. Recently shattered by intense palm fire racing up the coast from Tiberius, the team circled around the tomb of Dr. Archie Harte for a moment of prayer. If the scarred stones could speak, they would say: "the fire within me is brighter than the fire around me."

Then members of the team restored the entrance door to the chapel and brought it to be protected in Jerusalem until the center is restored to greater grandeur. It was a fitting start for Friends of Jerusalem International YMCA to raise \$10 million that includes restoration of Peniel as a Christian retreat center in the very footsteps of the ministry of Jesus.



Above L :Team members remove door from chapel for restoration .

R: Peniel on the Sea of Galilee

### YMCA Alumni (USA)

*Bridges* welcomes the new President of YMCA Alumni.

**Jean Carmichael** retired in 2014 after 37 years with the YMCA, climbing a successful career ladder that started as a fitness instructor and included a CEO position prior to ending her career as a VP for the Metropolitan YMCA of Fort Worth. She served in various positions on the Association of YMCA Professionals board and for the past seven years has been in leadership slots on the YMCA Alumni Board prior to her election this year. The following report demonstrates the scope and scale of activities being undertaken by the organization under her leadership.



**Jean Carmichael,**  
new AYR  
President

"Once per quarter, the Board of YMCA Alumni invites participation from our Committee Chairs, Resource Leaders, and representatives from our strategic partnerships. It is always an informative and much anticipated meeting, as was the case in our most recent March Board meeting. Many of our YMCA Alumni members are extremely interested and involved in the international aspect of our organization and look forward to getting updates. During the meeting we heard from **Phil Dwyer** and **Len Wilson** about plans to reinvigorate the Global Retirement Initiative and about the most recent recipients of grants from **Secours Speciaux**. YMCA Alumni granted \$200,000 from the **World Brotherhood Fund** to help Secours in this effort. **Mary Tikalsky**, reporting for World Services, informed us of the ongoing efforts to support YMCAs around the world and noted that almost half of the donations they received in 2021 came from YMCA Alumni. **Wayne Uhrig**, the new chair of the **International Service Committee**, reported that they now have 13 out of our 17 chapters represented on their committee as they coordinate efforts to link YMCA Alumni volunteers and YMCAs throughout the world with projects involving program development, mentoring, board and staff development, strategic planning, and program delivery. Much more information about YMCA Alumni and our international initiatives can be found by visiting our website: [ymcaalumni.org](http://ymcaalumni.org). We continue to look forward to working with, and hearing from, our international partners and sharing our stories."





## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### Secours Speciaux

#### General Secretary of Hakha YMCA, Myanmar Arrested for his Work with Student Protestors.

*"Resilience is the ability to face uncertainties. It is also about handling difficulties in the long run. We need to strengthen our institutional resilience. And for this, we need to strengthen our individual courage."* **Carlos Sanvee, Secretary General, World YMCA**

When **Ronnie Lyan** was placed under arrest in February, prayers were said around the world for him and his family and all the young people for whom his life is service.

The World YMCA and World YMCA's Staff emergency Fund (Secours Speciaux) responded immediately to meet emerging needs of him and his family.

**Alice (Bonnie) Mairs**, WFYR's Chair for the Fund has been keeping our members aware of developments and reports that Ronnie has been released. She will keep WFYR members aware of developments and is helping coordinate efforts to ensure that funds are available for all YMCA staff members in Myanmar if needed. The difficulty currently centers on the inability to find a secure method of delivering funds required.

Bonnie wishes to inform WFYR members that **Secours Speciaux** has a long history of assisting human rights and political emergencies like Ronnie's. It began after WWII in response to the dire situation of former YMCA staff in Eastern European countries when their YMCAs were taken over by Communist regimes. When an African national general secretary was killed after a military takeover, his wife and children received support until she was able to find employment. The Fund has continued to respond when YMCA staff have been forced to leave their homes for political reasons. In Asia, a Y staffer was in danger for his life because he was a member of the wrong ethnic group.

Bonnie has shared with **Bridges**, a personal background on how the YMCA responded to aid staffers during the "dirty wars" of 1970 -85. The writer, who prefers to remain anonymous, describes this period as a brutal campaign by ruling military regimes, known as military juntas that "claimed" a goal of purifying their society by eradicating



**Bonnie Mairs,**  
Chair, Secours  
Speciaux

leftist dissidents. Thousands were snatched from their homes to be interrogated, tortured and sometimes raped, many were killed or simply disappeared. Children born in prison were taken from their mothers and given to new families.

A human rights association in Argentina overcame harassment and threats of death to eventually secure a successful *Trial of the Juntas of 1985*. During the critical times of the association, the executive director, a former YMCA executive was subject to constant fear of imprisonment and possible elimination by the dictatorship.

Hundreds of thousands looked for refuge and asylum in overseas countries. Many YMCA people, risking their own well-being and that of their families, offered homes, transportation and connections. Temporary shelter often led to safe passage to other countries but could mean severe consequences to the host families.

"Those families, their courage, humanitarian spirit and solidarity will remain forever in the hearts of many, especially those that benefited from their caring Christian spirit and solidarity. Yes, we do have heroes in the YMCA."

### Canadian YMCA Alumni

*by Franco Savoia, President*

"Our new Executive assumed its role in January. We are facilitating the creation of Alumni Hubs around YMCAs across the country. Currently there are three such hubs: Toronto, Moncton and Calgary. Under our new bylaws each of them may have a representative on the Alumni Executive. Currently Toronto and Moncton have a representative on the Executive.

After the success of the November 30, 2020 virtual national gathering of the Canadian YMCA Alumni, we have decided to convene national gatherings. We have formed a program committee chaired by **Janet Giles** to plan and deliver these gatherings. The first for 2021 was held on March 8<sup>th</sup> with 52 in attendance. World Alliance President **Patricia Pelton** (above) provided a wonderful overview of the World YMCA during the pandemic. At each gathering there is also a fellowship opportunity by moving into virtual "breakout rooms." The next national gathering is planned for June 7, 2021. **Peter Dinsdale**, CEO of YMCA Canada (cont. p. 5)





## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

**Canadian YMCA Alumni** *Continued*

will update us on the challenges facing the YMCA and Y's in Canada.

We are encouraging local groups of Alumni to gather together virtually. The Alumni in Toronto, Winnipeg and Alberta have virtually come together to hear firsthand about the response of their local YMCAs to the pandemic. The crisis of the pandemic is fostering greater collaboration among Ys and between other community partners. Alumni with other community members are appreciating the courageous volunteer and staff leadership with their gut wrenching decisions such as permanently closing facilities and at the same time partnership with government and health officials to assist with such community-wide efforts such as vaccinations, provision of child care to health care and essential workers and continuing to provide virtual physical and mental health programs.

**Diana Deakin-Thomas** is our new bi-monthly newsletter editor. We have discovered that Alumni want to be updated on fellow alumni involvements. She is encouraging all of us to share through our newsletter *Tielines*.

Our communications committee chaired by **Gary Gray** is planning a new website. At the same time they are encouraging all Alumni who are on Facebook to join the

Canadian YMCA Alumni Facebook page.

The pandemic has highlighted the hardship and deprivation faced by many retired Y colleagues in Africa and South America whose Y's were unable to provide pensions. **John Haddock** chairs our *Secours Speciaux* campaign. Our hope is to grow the campaign in the months and years to come to meet the growing demand for support.



As we get more comfortable with virtual gathering platforms, we are refreshing many lasting and deep relationships that we formed in our Y careers and most importantly realizing that these assist us in aging more gracefully.

**WHEN THEY DOUBT THAT THERE IS MANY HOUSES IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE, SHOW THEM THIS IMAGE!**



*"In my Father's house are many rooms; If it were not so, I would have told you. John 14:2*

Printed in *Arcade Noe, YMCA News*, the newsletter of the Latin American and Caribbean YMCA of Retired Secretaries Association in December, 2020



## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### Germany, CSI Volunteers

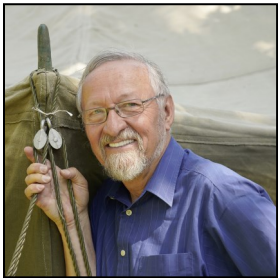
*by Albrecht Kaul / Project Manager*

#### Off to the Second Round

The Corona pandemic has derailed so many plans. In fact, it was planned in 2020 to travel with an exhibition through Germany in the 30th year after the German reunification. Since we hope quite strongly that the Corona situation will improve in the summer this year, we are planning a second attempt from June to October 3, 2021, the day of the 31st commemoration of unification in Germany.

What is this exhibition about? Housed in an army tent of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), it shows in the first part an artistically arranged picture wall with 36 pictures about life in the GDR – from 1949 to 1990. A second part tells of the life and oppression of Christians in this atheistic state. The third part then tells of the Peaceful Revolution and the difficulties of living in unity.

30 years ago and the young generation has hardly any knowledge about it – and yet it is important that we testify to them that God has always been at the side of Christians in difficult times and many have also experienced real miracles – to the point that the difficult days of autumn 1989 led to the fall of the communist regime without bloodshed. It was primarily young Christians who were able to achieve a revolution against the violent state. This required a lot of courage and the willingness to go to prison for the demand for change. Hardly



anyone knows about this today.

An important point in the tent is the discussion with contemporary witnesses from this epoch of German history —people who have shown courage to make a difference in their country. Many of the **members of our CSI** are also among these contemporary witnesses.

The same applies to the volunteers who take the tent to schools, churches, youth festivals and parishes. Teachers'



conferences and conventions have also ordered the tent. Visitors are guided through the exhibition by the staff, learn many details and can then talk to the witnesses and staff about their questions and feelings.

Since the tent dimensions are only 5×5 meters, the groups can not be too large. In the meantime, those waiting for a guided tour can keep themselves busy with outdoor activities. For example, there is a volleyball court. Here, however, you don't play over a net, but over a wall. In this way, the young people learn as they play how difficult it is not to see the "opponent" and how a wall separates life and communication. There are also games of skills and a quiz that once again emphasizes the situation in the former GDR. So the seniors of CSI share their experiences from difficult times, with the reality of our helping God and at the same time being important social part of political education. Even though the Peaceful Revolution has already been 31 years ago, we do not want to let the thanks to our God fade away.

### Y's Retired of the UK *by Graham Clarke*

It's interesting to surmise about how this period of history will be recorded or even how quickly it will be forgotten.

Although we have all experienced losses, both great and small, these losses have to be seen in the context of the huge amount of personal sacrifice and dedication that has and continues to be shown by those in caring services; remembering of course not just the frontline medical staff but the many support staff who work behind the scenes as technicians, porters, caterers, delivery workers and so on.



I hope that when restrictions are eased they will be recognized with more than clapping.

It seems almost every conversation that I unwittingly overhear is about The Jab. "Have you had it yet? Has your husband/wife/mother/neighbour/father had a letter? When are you getting yours?" I love these conversations.

However, I hope that we will also be "jabbed" with the ability to appreciate those who are working so hard; I pray that the Jabs of conscience and generosity across the richer nations which will enable all of God's children to know the hope and security that the vaccination against COVID brings by the sharing of vaccine stocks.

Greetings and Best Wishes to you all, Graham





## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### JFYR (Japan) *by Kohei Yamada*

We have 121 members in our Fellowship and we met online in 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19. We meet once a year as a general meeting in the Tokyo or Kyoto areas, while several officers also meet three times a year.

Seventeen members attended the Zoom general meeting with reports and discussions. And we enjoyed the fellowship after more than one year of no communication.

First, we heard the report from National Council of YMCAs of Japan, General Secretary **Mr Taguchi**: Due to the COVID-19, income has dropped by 6 million USD (total Income across all of Japan's 30 YMCAs was about 300 Million USD). Participants in regular programs especially within hotels, camp sites, Japanese language school, and health and fitness centers have severely decreased. On the other hand, recent programs such as child care, elder care, sub-contracted facilities of public sectors have been fully utilized even during the Covid pandemic. Another affect, this Covid-19 has made is a big change in the communication system of the whole country, including YMCAs. Almost all programs and communication have been done through Zoom and even national training programs for the professional secretaries. Additionally, a dramatical change in the relationship with big global companies such as Amazon, Costco, Ajinomoto, etc., occurred. They have given large donations to people through the YMCA network in Japan. One of the examples was that the Asia Youth Center which has hostels in its YMCA building was supported by those donations for accommodating the people suffering from domestic violence during this pandemic.

Below is a picture of some the participants in the JFYR January 2021 general meeting, on Zoom for the first time.



### U.S. YMCA Update:

*From Kevin Washington, President and CEO, YMCA of the USA*

Dear Colleagues and WFYR Friends,

"The American Rescue Plan (ARP)" provides significant resources that will help YMCAs retain staff and continue delivering essential services in their communities.



When the pandemic disrupted daily life in communities and forced our facilities to suspend usual day-to-day operations, the Y stepped up to ensure our neighbors received the support they needed to survive, despite our own financial difficulties and staff shortages. An

important ARP provision for the Y is expanding eligibility for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to include nonprofits with more than 500 employees – a group that previously did not have access to federal support. Large Ys are now able to access these critical resources, which will help them avoid additional layoffs, keep their doors open and expand emergency services like feeding families facing food insecurity and providing child care to working families.

As the nation's largest nonprofit provider of child care, the Y knows that kids will need academic enrichment, social-emotional supports and physical activity this summer more than ever.

The ARP provides historic resources for child care providers like the Y to re-engage youth and deliver programs to more children and families. These resources include \$30 billion for comprehensive afterschool and summer learning and enrichment programs across the country, \$39 billion for child care supports and stabilization grants and \$1 billion for Head Start. These unparalleled investments acknowledge what youth-serving organizations have known for a long time: out-of-school time is essential to the well-being of children. These funds will make a real difference in the lives of kids and families as they strive to recover from the pandemic.

We know there is still a long road to full recovery, but the ARP represents a significant step in the right direction. We are thankful this legislation includes resources that will help YMCAs continue to be vital community assets and support our nation's recovery.



# BRIDGES

C/O Ken White  
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USA

## *World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees*



## *Your invitation to Aarhus 2022*

### **WFYR 7<sup>th</sup> World Conference**



#### Venue

*City of Aarhus, Denmark, July 2022, in conjunction with the 20<sup>th</sup> World Council Meeting*

#### Introduction

*The WFYR 7<sup>th</sup> World Conference will be held in July 2022 in conjunction with the 20<sup>th</sup> World Council Meeting of the World Alliance of YMCAs, in the beautiful city of Aarhus, the second largest in Denmark.*

*This conference will be historic and will enable us to gather in fellowship within the context of the global movement, providing ample opportunities to connect with its current leadership, to share, celebrate, learn, and build strong and lasting relationships.*

### **BRIDGES IS FOR ALL WHO WISH TO RECEIVE IT**

This edition of **Bridges** was distributed only electronically. If you have a retired Y colleague without Email, please provide the necessary information below and Email or mail the details to Ken White. WFYR has received only a few names of retirees lacking Email, and continues to explore options for postal deliveries.

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