

# Members get moments at Springfield Y

**T**oday, more than ever, people and organizations are swamped with activities and agendas. It's all we can do to tackle our immediate responsibilities and wrestle with emergencies.

Who has time for assessing past performance or looking ahead to long-range planning?

Every once in a while, however, it's vital to carve out time for reflecting on how you're doing. Perhaps most important is to get input from those around you. Otherwise, all that constant activity might be producing little in the way of results.

"Member Moments with the CEO" at the Y are designed to get that input. The YMCA of Greater Springfield has held roundtable discussions for each of its three family centers recently.

Kirk Smith, president and chief executive officer, has been in attendance at each one, to share his vision with those present and to find out from them how the Y might improve.

The Community Services Family Center meeting was attended by Smith, along with Kathy Treglia, vice president of education and government relations, Ayanra Crawford, his executive secretary, some adult mem-



bers and some teens.

The Community Services Family Center is located in the downtown Springfield facility and consists of the camping, early childhood, school age and teen programs.

Smith opened the discussion by throwing out some facts about our Y. The Greater Springfield YMCA has 25,000 members: one-fifth of the population of the area it serves. It has 11 standalone locations. It's "mid-major" in size by YMCA of the USA standards.

"The YMCA is a way of life, not just another bill to pay," Smith told the group. "We want to be in the top three (of those places you spend the most time): home, work, school, casino, whatever."

Most members were quite vocal.

Ramonita Santiago said she's been a member for seven months, although she's been visiting the Y for more than three years to drop off and pick up a child. She said she was unaware of all the Y had to offer. She wished she had been given a tour.

"You have youth here, but where are the parents?" she added. "There are over 800 kids here!"

"You mentioned something



Photo by CICILY CORBETT

**Member Moments with the CEO at the Y, from left, Aaron Jenkins, Timothy Baymon Jr., Gloria Vasquez, Katisha Diaz, CEO Kirk Smith, Ramonita Santiago, James Lightfoot III and Madeline Ramos.**

that for me is a bump in the night," Smith replied. "Parent involvement! Many parents don't understand the benefit of family membership; the Y becomes a drive-through. We don't make the YMCA a big deal, and we should! We have an obligation to the parents as well.

"We don't know what happens to you at home or at work," he concluded, "but we guarantee that while you are here you will be treated like kings and queens, with the utmost respect, regardless of body type, fitness level or whatever."

Parent Gloria Vasquez pointed out that her three children were not all at the same after-school site, making it hard for her to pick them all up in timely fashion.

Treglia agreed that her concern was valid and promised to reassign one of the children immediately.

Madeline Ramos was unhappy that a popular staff member had quit or been dismissed from the child-care program abruptly without parents being informed. Smith agreed that when at all possible, the transition should be made smoother.

Ramos was quick to add that staff had done wonders

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**Kirk Smith**

with one of her children who had been having behavior problems, and that she loved all of the Magic Years teachers.

Santiago had praise for afterschool teen program staff members, including Tim Baymon. Father of five Aaron Jenkins said everyone was working hard and doing well. Teen Katisha Diaz suggested that youth programs be more organized.

"I have been at the Y since before I could talk," said Diaz. "Day care, breakfast club, summer camp, after school. The staff is good, but they don't always plan what they are going to do with the kids."

Overall, the Y got a pretty good report card from patrons. Each problem identified mostly amounted to a breakdown in communications. Smith reiterated that having whole families involved in the Y would make a big difference. Treglia called the Y a "one-stop shop."

"People try to compare us to other gyms, and we are competing with them in one sense, but when you walk off the wellness floor, the competition ends!" Smith said. "We leverage everything: you pay to do more good work in the community. When you're young, you want to look good; then you just want to feel better; and finally, you just want to live longer. We are there for all three stages."

*The YMCA of Greater Springfield was founded in 1852 and is the second oldest YMCA in the United States. Some 30,000 members and program participants are served annually in Springfield, Wilbraham and 11 surrounding cities and towns.*

*For more information on YMCA programs or how you can get involved, call (413) 739-6951 (Springfield Branch) or (413) 596-2749 (Scantico Valley Branch), or visit [www.springfieldy.org](http://www.springfieldy.org)*

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