



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**CELEBRATING  
5 YEARS OF  
30 UNDER 30!**

**30  
UNDER  
30**

**EMERGING LEADERS  
RESOURCE NETWORK  
2022**

# WHY 30 UNDER 30?

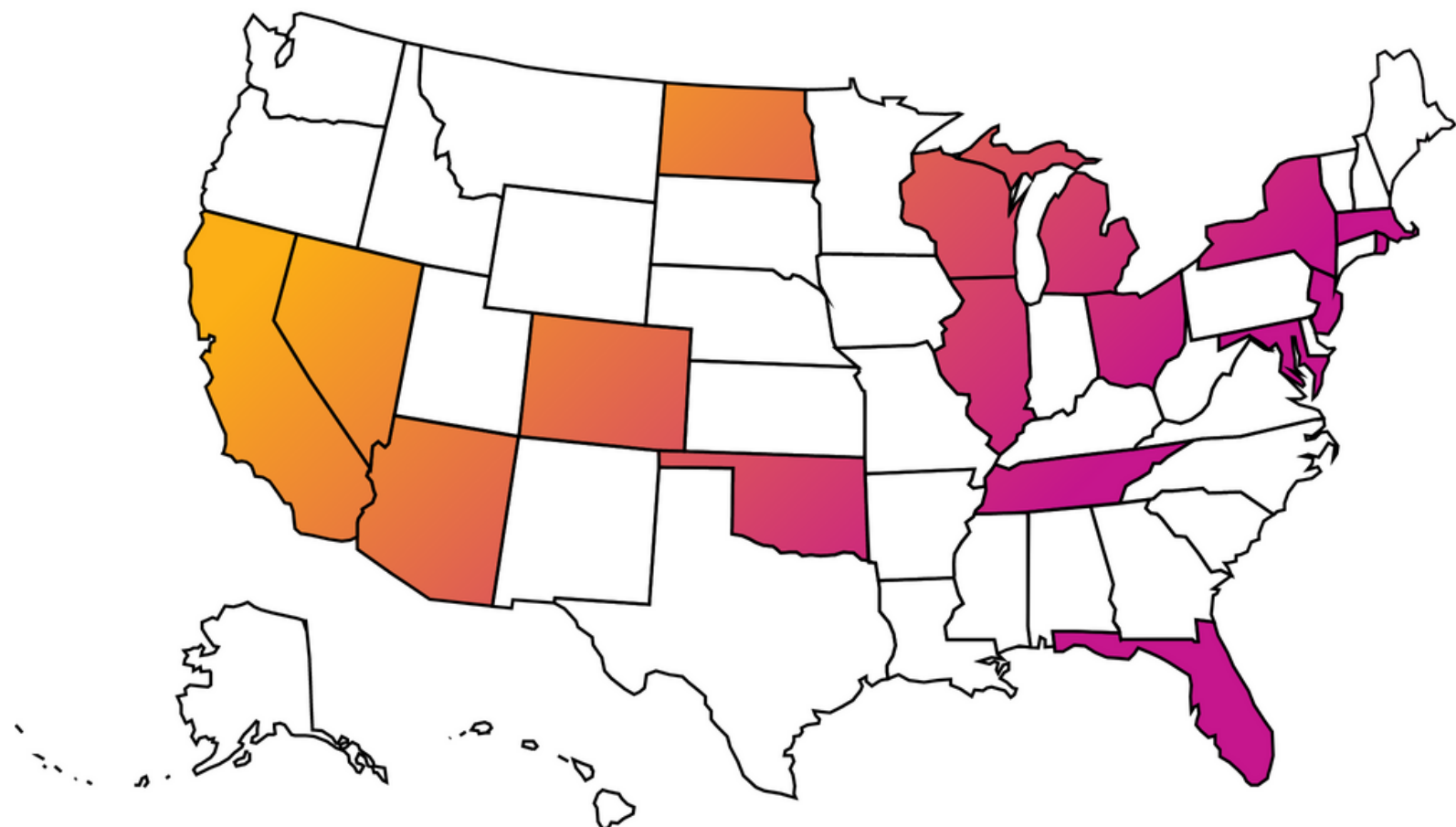
Five years ago, in the summer of 2017, the National Emerging Leaders Resource Network (ELRN) Steering Committee began a strategic planning process through which we found a substantial imbalance between the number of younger staff in the total workforce in the United States and the number of millennials who make up the YMCA workforce. While the rest of the country's workforce was getting younger, the YMCA's workforce was aging. The recent pandemic and the disruptions to how YMCAs conduct their work have exacerbated this situation, with nearly 14,000 staff under the age of 35 leaving the YMCA since 2020.

As in many areas, the pandemic magnified and accelerated trends that were already in play. Growing dissatisfaction with the workplace environment, inequity in employment and quality of work throughout the organizational chart, and a lack of empowerment to perform work are just a few of the issues ELRN has learned impact the quality of life for young professionals. We celebrate the thriving work environment the YMCA can be and call on the YMCA movement to learn from the disruptions brought about by COVID and transform the work environment to support our community of YMCA staff.

#NextGenNeeds, a framework of preferred workplace conditions that younger generations seek from their employer is the result of this research. This framework highlights three areas of opportunity to strengthen the YMCA work environment; these are work-life harmony, professional development and organizational culture. Currently, 362 staff under the age of 35 are in C-Suite or Senior Leader roles across the movement. Our goal is that our work will result in more emerging leaders with seats at the table.

While #NextGenNeeds is new, our first efforts to highlight the accomplishments of young staff was the debut of 30 Under 30 in 2018. This award recognizes staff who embody the YMCA mission, and formally acknowledges 30 fulltime YMCA leaders under the age of 30 for their accomplishments and potential to lead our many YMCA Associations in the coming years. We are so excited to celebrate our fifth year of honoring 30 YMCA leaders under the age of 30!

# WHERE ARE THE 30 UNDER 30 WINNERS?



## ARIZONA

Alicia Bravo-Nunez	22
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Isaiah Teran	27

## CALIFORNIA

Andrea Maciel	17
Jason Najera	25

## COLORADO

Ivan Portilla	5
Kristen Spronz	20

## FLORIDA

Alexis Lopez	26
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## ILLINOIS

Kenne'quia Howell	15
Abbey Wolski	32

## MARYLAND

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## MASSACHUSETTS

Phil Gomez	4
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## MICHIGAN

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## NEVADA

Sabrina Arcos	12
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# PHIL GOMEZ (he/him)

## ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

**OLD COLONY YMCA**  
Family Services | Brockton, Massachusetts

If you say the name Phil Gomez in the Old Colony YMCA Association, everyone knows him and will smile and say, "I love Phil!". Phil has worked in many different sectors of social services operations and is a leader not only within the social services branch, but throughout the entire Association and has chaired the Youth Conference annually for several years. Phil is known as a true gem within the YMCA - an amazing friend, colleague, and support to anyone with whom he interacts. Phil is always stepping up to help without uttering a word of complaint or hesitation and he consistently leads without seeking acknowledgement or accolades.

Over the years, Phil has contributed to the strengthening of several community partnerships and has worked to amplify mentoring across the community. In his current role, Phil works with families experiencing homelessness, building an extensive network of housing organizations, crisis management teams, mental health supports, various landlords, and beyond to support these families. Phil is always focused on the needs of YMCA clients and ensuring they're able to access all the resources the community has to offer. Phil is willing to help in any way needed and has driven food bags to clients, spent time off the clock creating food bags, driving clients to appointments, helping them access transportation, and anything else required to ensure they have everything they need.

Phil has a special talent for relationship building, both within and outside of the walls of the YMCA. Phil continues to innovatively engage clients who are no longer enrolled in Y services, as he knows the importance of keeping them connected to the Y and the community. Phil also co-chairs the PRIZM Employee Resource Group, a local ERG for folks who identify as LGBTQ+ and allies. After receiving feedback that the activities PRIZM had focused on were not of interest to all, Phil took the feedback and switched gears and is now working with the team to offer a different approach to engaging folks. Phil also helped secure money from Y-USA's ERG seed funding so that this new approach could be funded.

## ABOUT PHIL

Phil's journey with the YMCA began in his undergraduate years when he served as an intern providing case management services for families experiencing homelessness. Over the years, Phil grew his YMCA career, holding various positions supporting youth development and family strengthening initiatives. Phil's background in clinical social work allows him to build meaningful relationships with youth and families while supporting them in reaching their ultimate goals. When Phil is not working, he enjoys spending time with friends, taking nature walks, and traveling.



# IVAN PORTILLA (he/him)

## HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE ASSISTANT

**YMCA OF THE ROCKIES**  
Estes Park Center | Estes Park, Colorado

It takes a special person to have a level of empathy and compassion for people that they decide to dedicate their personal and professional lives solely to help others help themselves – and Ivan is one of those special people. Ivan serves three different YMCA's including the Estes Park Center YMCA, his hometown Y – the YMCA of Colombia, and most recently, the YMCA of Vancouver, Canada where he works with a team of members across the Globe in order to achieve peace by learning and listening to each other's perspectives, ideas, and hopes for a better future. Ivan is also a part of the Youth Peace Network that involves a group of people from countries all over the world to create a more friendly and equal place.

Ivan is a part of the International Training Program at the YMCA of the Rockies and uses his time and efforts to live every experience he can in order to grow as a person. His goals in life consist of helping the communities he walks through grow as well, and this passion shows up consistently. One example of this is the way Ivan conducts staff interviews. Ivan will find meaningful ways to make the person on the other side of the interview feel comfortable and heard. He actively listens to their stories and responds as if he can relate to every word spoken. Ivan cares deeply about the people around him, always stopping others to say hi, thank them for something, and to share his warm smile.

Ivan continues to seek education, improvements, and input from the people around him to make the environment better than when he first arrived. He does so by ensuring that people are aware they are not alone and by addressing the fact that friendliness is contagious. In this way, he breaks down barriers and has open-minded conversations with people who are more reserved. Ivan encourages people to take pride in themselves when making small improvements as this helps people to develop a deeper appreciation for themselves and overall increases their interactions between other people. Ivan truly sparks change, motivation, and unity among all he encounters.

## ABOUT IVAN

Ivan's journey with the YMCA started in 2019, when he began working as a seasonal housekeeper at YMCA of the Rockies – Snow Mountain Ranch, and then for the International Camp Counselor Program at the YMCA of Colombia. Ivan fell in love with the Rocky Mountains and decided to return to Colorado to work in the Human Resources office for the Estes Park Center. Ivan strongly believes in people and in the YMCA mission. This passion motivates him to work in community wellbeing, inclusion, and peace leading him to join the Youth Peace Network of the YMCA of Vancouver. Ivan loves playing volleyball, running and mountain biking and believes having the opportunity to enjoy nature in the Rockies is a privilege and a way to strengthen my spirit, mind and body.





# MARIA ISABEL MARIN (she/her)

## HEALTH EQUITY DIRECTOR

**YMCA OF PAWTUCKET**  
Pawtucket Family YMCA | Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Maria has been essential in our community and our state in helping to address health disparities. She is an advocate for ALL and has been pivotal in developing an inclusive environment inside and outside of the Y. Without a doubt, Maria is an emerging leader and I am very lucky to be able to work with her every day. She makes our community a better place!

Maria has received many awards including Woman of the Year from the City of Pawtucket. She was at the forefront of Rhode Island's efforts in combatting COVID-19 and was instrumental in the testing, advocacy, prevention and vaccination efforts during the height of the pandemic. Her unwavering efforts have been instrumental in improving the lives of the citizens of Pawtucket and Central Falls, RI.

Maria is a key advocate to the LatinX community in our area, and she is able to connect, build trust and advocate for the community to key stakeholders in the state. She is on the Health Equity Zone steering committee with over 20 community partners, and is the head of the Youth Health Equity Leadership Group in Pawtucket and Central Falls.

In addition, Maria in collaboration with community partners, developed a Youth Health Equity Leadership Group for youth ages 14-19. Together, 25 youth have served over 300 meals to the homeless in the community, participated in health fairs, had a period drive, participated in river cleanups, and many more initiatives. She has been a mentor for these youth and has shown them that their voice can be heard and they can make a difference in their community.

Finally, Maria has been a huge contributor to developing community focus groups on housing, health care, food insecurity, and use of public spaces in the area. She is the catalyst in building our Y without walls, and directly impacting the community through social services and improving the health of the diverse populations of Pawtucket and Central Falls.

## ABOUT MARIA

Maria loves traveling, dancing, laughing and enjoying time with her family. Her YMCA story is unique and started before she realized it. In 2010, her family was devastated when tragedy touched their home. Her father passed away and her family, once very united, was in agony. Her father was one of their household's primary providers, and his death left their family in financial trouble and distress. Her mother and the community gathered efforts to sign Maria up for the Explorers' camp at the Pawtucket Family YMCA. In an effort to distract the emotional pain we were in, Maria spent time with fellow campers that soon became close friends, enjoying the outdoors and adventure every day. Maria can attest that this was one of the best summers she's had in her lifetime, as so many beautiful memories were created. She never thought of returning to the YMCA, but during the pandemic she returned to Rhode Island to be closer to her family and reintegrate herself into the community. This is how she found the Outreach Coordinator position at the Pawtucket Family YMCA, which opened the door to better serve our local communities.



# LYNDSEY SPEER (she/her)

## FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

**YMCA OF GREATER OKLAHOMA CITY**  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Lyndsey is exceptionally gifted in building relationships and excels in all she does. Her energy is infectious and she is constantly seeking to grow and learn to grow in her career. She is passionate about giving back to an organization that was a huge part of her development as a teen and she will be a huge part of the growth of the Y movement.

Lyndsey started her Y career as the Youth & Government Youth Governor in 2017 and since then, she has volunteered in numerous capacities for teen programming, both locally and nationally. Most recently, she attended National Advocacy Days as YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City's sponsor and general event leader. She empowers young people to be changemakers and to find their voices.

In just one year of employment, Lyndsey assisted in the expansion of several outreach programs meeting the needs of kids in high-risk communities. In her current role, she has already secured grant funds for the organization and manages reporting and financial information for private and state funds. Under her leadership, we increased our donations for our partner agency's campaign by 11% over last year.

Lyndsey has served in various volunteer leadership roles and most recently completed a 16-week commitment as a facilitator for Getting Ahead, an anti-poverty initiative in our Association, focusing on breaking the cycles of generational poverty. During her time at the Y she has cultivated and sustained numerous relationships with community partners. In addition, Lyndsey has been responsible for the planning and implementation of many large-scale events providing opportunities for families to receive basic needs for their children while also bringing in partners to offer services they may not otherwise have access to.

## ABOUT LYNDSEY

Lyndsey first became involved with the YMCA in 2013 through the Oklahoma YMCA Youth and Government program. Through the time she spent in the program, she developed a passion for policy and public service, and in 2016, she was elected as the Oklahoma Youth Governor. She went on to play soccer at Oklahoma City University, earning degrees in both Political Science and Philosophy. Upon graduating in 2021, she began working for the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City as the Social Responsibility Coordinator. In August, Lyndsey accepted the position of Financial Development Director and now oversees the research, application, and reporting for all of her Association's public and private grants. In her free time, Lyndsey loves to read and listen to true crime podcasts. She is currently writing a fantasy novel and hopes to publish it in the several months. She and her fiancé love running and working out and are currently training for their first half marathon. Lyndsey loves traveling and exploring new places and is always up for a fun adventure.



# JUSTIN GOODWIN (he/him)

## PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**YMCA OF GREATER FLINT**  
YMCA Camp Copneconic | Fenton, Michigan

Justin has been a leader at YMCA Camp Copneconic for almost a decade. He began his tenure as a Day Camp Counselor and has held several seasonal positions before taking on a full-time role in 2021 as a Program Director. Justin leads Overnight Camp and School Programs at his camp.

Before starting full-time, Justin was a vital piece of the camp's food program and provided support ensuring capacity to feed others with over 150,000 meals. He also served as a classroom leader in the School Year Day Camp, which provided academic support and camp enrichment to kids who were participating in remote learning in 2020-2021.

As a new full-time director, Justin has quickly worked to uplift the programs in his purview. He's created new programs, worked to forge community partnerships, and has been highly successful in supporting and developing the seasonal staff who report to him, specifically through support with mental health resources.

As a highlight, Justin created a Mental Health Support system for his staff team at Overnight Camp. Justin connected with funders and mental health professionals who were committed to serving camp staff. Through the procurement of grant funding, Justin worked to provide free resources including scheduled and on-call therapy sessions for camp staff throughout the summer. This program was highly utilized and was a valuable tool for ensuring the Overnight Camp staff team were constantly at their best to serve their campers.

Championing the Y's mission of being "For All", Justin is a dedicated fundraiser and works to ensure visibility of the financial supports that the YMCA provides. Justin's goal is always to ensure that camp is available for all children, regardless of their ability to pay.

## ABOUT JUSTIN

Justin is a Y kid through and through! He recalls fond memories of playing basketball at the Y and going to camp as a child. He started working summers at his camp in 2012 and never left! Just says, "working at camp is a way of life and I couldn't imagine working anywhere else." Working with youth, especially in a camp setting, is his passion and he is grateful for his career. Outside of work, Justin enjoys fly fishing or listening to the latest hip hop album.





## **COURTNEY MCKEARIN** (she/her) **SWIM DIRECTOR**

**YMCA OF CENTRAL MARYLAND**  
Ward YMCA | Abingdon, Maryland

Courtney always goes the extra mile. If there is a special event that needs a lead or an idea for creative programming, she is your go-to person. The relationships she builds with members and other organizations are personal and long-lasting. She has a special empathy for children and families with diverse abilities, and has a gift for helping them feel welcomed at the Y.

Courtney has created an adaptive swim lesson program and has written curriculum for her instructors as well as in-service trainings to prepare them to work with diverse populations.

Coming out of COVID times, she has continually exceeded her goals for swim. At a time where many of our centers had shrinking participation numbers, hers continued to grow and so did her staff team, while many of our centers are struggling to find guards, hers continue to stay.

Courtney has developed strong relationships with local organizations to offer free Safety Around Water programs as well as family nights for their constituents. These partnerships have helped the Y provide a safe space for the families to congregate as well as teach a life-saving skill to those who could not otherwise afford swim lessons.

### **ABOUT COURTNEY**

Courtney's Y story has everything to do with Eastern Kentucky. She is a background drowning survivor after playing a game in her backyard pool with her brother when she was six years old. Because her father knew how to do CPR, Courtney survived. This story is significant to her because she knows that if her parents had been given the information on drowning prevention that the Y provides to the community, this could have been a very different story.

Courtney shared, "The Y has provided me such a unique way to impact my community, and I hope to use my experience and background to be a positive influence to all the people I encounter daily! In my spare time I love to spend time with my husband and our 2 daughters, roller blade with my dogs, or travel to new places. I also enjoy binge watching a good tv series from time to time."



# ANDREW STILES

## ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**YMCA OF CENTRAL STARK COUNTY**  
Paul and Carol David YMCA | Massillon, Ohio

Andrew is viewed by their colleagues as a true “emerging” leader. Andrew has had an exciting career moving from childcare staff, to tackling bigger branches, and now as the Associate Executive Director of their location. Andrew has quickly rose through leadership levels – in four years they have moved through five positions and has consistently met enrollment and budget goals but more importantly has maintained a strong staff team.

At first glance, Andrew is a leader who is meticulous in detail, however, after working closely with them it's evident that the time and attention they devote to personal relationships with staff, parents and members is what stands out most.

Andrew has a leadership stance that is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. They are careful in their perspective and considers the greater impact of their decisions on the community they serve. Serving in a rural/suburban branch in Northeast Ohio provides many challenges towards meeting that commitment. Andrew has created a space within their staff team that is welcoming and safe for all. They have used their leadership to elevate the voices of not only staff but also the families they serve. Andrew is humble and their commitment to DEI is never for personal gain; spending time with Andrew will allow you to truly see their commitment at work.

Andrew's strongest collaboration has been with the local school districts. They serve as a “character champion leader” to honor those students whose character is exemplary and demonstrated the core values of the YMCA. Recently, Andrew joined the local Rotary to increase their community involvement outside of the school system and the Y.

## ABOUT ANDREW

As a “Y Family”, Andrew was lucky to have their mom as their pre-school teacher at the YMCA. Their earliest memories are of those times their mom would walk the class to the YMCA for swim lessons. Fast forward to Andrew's college days, they became a staff member themselves as a sports official for flag football and adult basketball. Upon graduation they worked in a school for two years but wanting a larger impact they left the classroom and ended up at the Meyers Lake YMCA in 2018 as a Before and After school site director. In the past four years with the YMCA of Central Stark County they have served at three different YMCAs in seven different positions. Outside of the YMCA Andrew enjoys spending time with his wife, working out, spoiling his two dogs, and remodeling their old farmhouse!



# CAITY KING (she/her/they/them)

## DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC ADVANCEMENT

**NOBLE COUNTY FAMILY YMCA**  
Perry, Oklahoma

Caity started her Y career as a summer camp and afterschool counselor in spring of 2014 and has served in various roles in the Y since. She is a strategic thinker with a camp heart which is a fabulous combination.

In the summer of 2020, Caity moved to begin working for the Noble County Family YMCA. She was able to work with staff at our small Y and model big impact work. When she first started at the Noble County Y she worked in hands-on youth development and program quality and improvement. At the start of the pandemic, she worked with Perry Public schools to develop Learning Lab, a free tutoring and support program for students enrolled in virtual learning. She also worked with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and Oklahoma University to implement a full-day support for students in virtual learning. She has also been instrumental in our hunger initiatives

Caity transitioned to remote work in 2021 and has since taken on financial development and program operations in addition to grant management. Today, as I complete this form, Caity is here, in Oklahoma, painting fields because we have an unexpected vacancy in sports. There is no job too large or too small for Caity King. She is a thought partner with the ability to inspire, and our Y is better because of her.

## ABOUT CAITY

Growing up, you could find Caity playing basketball in the unairconditioned back gym of the YMCA, sneaking in before practices to play H.O.R.S.E. and staying late to work on her free throws. Nine years ago, her best friend asked her to be a camp counselor with her over the summer at the Y. Caity didn't know then how much life the Y would give to her and how much magic there is in the community it creates, something she is honored to help create and expand for others. In her spare time, she enjoys being outdoors, painting, writing, visiting museums and coffee shops, reading, catching up on SNL or the New York Times, and hanging out with loved ones.



# SABRINA ARCOS (she/her)

## YOUTH AND FAMILY COORDINATOR

**YMCA OF SOUTHERN NEVADA**  
Durango Hills YMCA | Las Vegas, Nevada

Sabrina is an intentional leader within our Association who works diligently to create a safe and welcoming space for all. During our 2020 closures, she was laid off and continued to volunteer when we did meal services and would always say, “the work that I want to do does not exist without the Y, so I will help the Y in any way I can.” In a world changed by the pandemic, our children have suffered emotionally, socially and mentally, and Sabrina saw a need within our community for us to be better-equipped to support them. Unprompted, she took a Mental Health First Aid training and has since been a vocal advocate for mental health.

Sabrina has pioneered enrichment programs at a local school that did not have accessible after-school programs, and spearheaded integrating social emotional learning into our summer camp curriculum. Her diligent work is providing a safe and enriching space youth who otherwise wouldn’t have it. Sabrina’s efforts in mental health awareness earned her the P3/Golden Knight’s Hero of The Game, an award recognizing local community heroes who go above and beyond their roles.

Her ability to act has made her a literal lifesaver! Through connecting with a local junior high student who had skipped school, she was able to provide an action plan once the young person shared suicidal thoughts. Working in tandem with another community member, Sabrina was also instrumental in providing care for a community member suffering from a heart attack at a neighboring park. It’s not only Sabrina’s training that makes a difference but her ability to apply that knowledge and act.

## ABOUT SABRINA

Sabrina first got her start at the Y in her home town of Santa Maria in 2014. A staff member came to her high school promoting a club for students that wanted to work in education. At the time she knew she wanted to make an impact in the youth of her community and thought education was the only place to do so. She was accepted into the Y’s internship program and began volunteering at the front desk and in the special events department. She quickly fell in love with the environment and being able to see the impact of the work the Y was doing.

She changed her major from education to recreation; knowing that she had found her calling with the Y. She went from volunteering at 17 to overseeing the Internship Program at 20. She met her partner at the Y, and they moved to Nevada in 2019 and began working at the Y of Southern Nevada.

Sabrina worked in membership but continued to volunteer for different departments and events. After a lot of hard work, she was promoted to Youth and Family Coordinator in 2020 which has allowed her to get back into what she always knew she wanted, working with the youth of her community. Sabrina plans to continue her schooling with a focus on child and family services to help grow the impact the Y Movement has on the Las Vegas community.





# ALI OTT (she/her)

## YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**YMCA OF CASS AND CLAY COUNTIES**  
Fercho YMCA | Fargo, North Dakota

Ali is absolutely exceptional. She leads with ease and is humble in her recognition & efforts as a leader. She has greatly enhanced our youth programming. Ali's summer programs serve about sixty to eighty different programs; Camp Koda, Mini Camp, Rock Climbing Camp, and Sports of all sorts. These camps serve roughly 400 to 600 children throughout the year, and serve 15 to 20 children at Churches United, the local homeless shelter on a weekly basis. She is creative and innovative as she developed programming for tiny dancers, hero week, STEM programming, and more.

She is driven and passionate and believes every child deserves a Y experience. She explains, "my biggest dream is that these kids would grow up to say, 'my fondest memory was making the city's largest slime using a kiddie pool'".

She makes everything accessible for all. Even when transportation was a challenge for some of her participants, she configured the bus route to bring them to and from programming. She is a problem-solver and takes on any challenge!

Recently, Ali was awarded the opportunity speak on behalf of the YMCA for an innovation project. In partnership with five individuals, they were able to build an Express Y which would mimic a boutique-style workout platform targeted at Gen Z. She used her graphic design, and Y leadership training skills to build a presentation and speak to other YMCA CEOs and VPs on what was learned through the process!

## ABOUT ALI

Ali enjoys spending her free time with her son and husband. They enjoy baking together and attending community events. Ali started at the YMCA when she was 18 as a part-time job to get her through college. She ended up falling in love with the mission and people, and almost seven years later, she's still here and just as passionate about the work she gets to do every day.





# RYAN MCVANN (he/him)

## SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP

**MERRIMACK VALLEY YMCA**  
Andover/North Andover YMCA | Andover, Massachusetts

Ryan has been instrumental in key initiatives to move our Association forward by improving our culture with staff, volunteers and members. Ryan started a mobile food market that served over 300 families and leads an Association-wide Employee Resource Group to improve employee engagement and culture.

Ryan was promoted to Senior Director of Membership earlier this year and he has built a team that can support his efforts to reinvent and grow our membership program. He always comes with solutions even before we know there is an issue or problem and is currently making sure our membership costs and categories align with the demographics of our community. He understands that we can do more to be inclusive and offer meaningful programs for the community. He has educated members who disagree with our inclusion policy to serve all, and firmly is committed to eliminating barriers to access.

Ryan received the Cause Driven Leadership Award for the innovative programs he created, has participated in our Executive Development Program, achieved Team Leader Certification, and is continually growing membership numbers to meet strategic plan goals. He is a role model for youth and staff, and displays our core values in all that he does.

### ABOUT RYAN

Ryan says that “you either love the gym or you hate it; there is no in-between.” He feels that perhaps the ‘hate it’ crowd might consider a less intense stance if they had the right trainer to guide them. When Ryan first began personal training and group exercise years ago, it was with a specific purpose in mind: to help people develop into the best version of themselves. While having a Masters’ degree in physiology was crucial to his practice, Ryan found success when he also focused on reading people’s energy during a session.

Knowing when to dial it back for a timely recovery and when to ramp up the intensity can make the difference between a workout that delivers results and one that falls flat. Ryan uses this same technique when he is fulfilling his other passion as a DJ at weddings and other events. “Energy is a real thing, especially when you have a group of people gathered together,” Ryan explains, “and paying attention to those little things can make a big impact on the event as a whole.”

Proud of the mission he gets to be a part of through the YMCA, Ryan is uniquely aware that some of the individuals that come through the movement truly depend on it to teach them essential skills for life success. It’s the work that energizes him, and keeps his perspective in check.

Throughout his journey, Ryan has been fortunate to have his biggest cheerleader by his side. Ryan and his fiancée, Laura, are excited to officially tie the knot in June of 2023 after being together for over 9 years.



# KENNE'QUIA HOWELL (she/her)

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**YMCA OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO**  
South Side YMCA | Chicago, Illinois

As the Executive Director of the South Side YMCA, Kenne'quia Howell plays an integral role in the health, wellbeing, and joy of Chicago's South Side community. By taking inventory of her neighborhood's needs, and forming strategic, transformational partnerships to address those needs, Kenne'quia creates a compassionate, agile community of care at the South Side YMCA.

In conjunction with the Y's Research and Evaluation Team, Kenne'quia led a robust community assessment to better understand what her community needs and wants. During her tenure as Executive Director, her efforts have brought the South Side YMCA a new outdoor basketball court, free basketball clinics and career panels led by Chicago-area sports leaders, the chance for youth to meet WNBA star Candace Parker, a digital literacy lab, high-speed Wi-Fi, funding for afterschool, teen and community programming, increased financial assistance across all lines of business, fresh produce and so much more.

Her tireless efforts and her leadership style make the Y a better place. She is working to sustainably build inclusive, equitable communities, and consistently learns more about and educates others on key issues affecting diverse communities locally and around the world.

In addition to securing vital resources for, and listening to her community, Kenne'quia leads with genuine care for her members, passion for mentoring and uplifting her staff, commitment to furthering equity in all she does, and an infectious enthusiasm that can best be described as "South Side's secret sauce." Her embodiment of the Y's core values, on top of her love of people and culture, creates a ripple effect that makes not only the South Side YMCA better, but our Association and the overall Y movement better as well.

Kenne'quia has been involved in a number of Y-USA programs including Emerging Global Leaders Institute, the Equitable Communities Agenda, and most recently, the Antiracist Multicultural Organization International Learning Institute. She is a changemaker in the truest sense of the word, always learning and catalyzing a positive ripple effect throughout—and beyond—Chicago's South Side.

## ABOUT KENNE'QUIA

Kenne'quia started working for the Y in May of 2015 as a part-time Front Desk and After School staff at the Lake View YMCA. After about six months, she transferred to the YMCA in her community, the South Side YMCA and that's when she fell in love with the Y. She was working part-time at the front desk, but her supervisor encouraged her to lean in and take ownership of her role no matter how part-time and watch where the Y could take her. Kenne'quia leaned in and was soon promoted to Front Desk lead which was a full-time role. She was later promoted to Membership Supervisor, then Membership Director and now Executive Director. During the time that she was promoted to Membership Director, my next supervisor and mentor started to expose her to the larger Y movement and encouraged her to stretch herself and begin learning more. Kenne'quia is so glad she listened. Programs like Emerging Global Leaders Institute have helped her grow as a person and a leader, and she's made the connections of a lifetime. Kenne'quia's hobbies include reading, dabbling into her creative side through writing, coloring and spending time with her dog, Huey.



# LAUREN MANIA (she/her)

## LIFEGUARD & SWIM LESSON INSTRUCTOR

**PAWTUCKET YMCA**  
Woonsocket YMCA | Woonsocket, Rhode Island

Lauren is an outstanding individual. She is a member of our Y swim team, has been the points leader for the team, has won the coaches award multiple times, and is on track to graduate high school at the top of her class. In addition to taking over many responsibilities at home, Lauren works 25+ hours a week at the YMCA to support her family and offset the cost of college. She's an inspiration to her coworkers and peers.

She has greatly expanded the reach of our swim lesson enrollment and offerings. Among all of her accomplishments in the pool, at school, or on the field, Lauren is still very present in the community. She's a role model for her peers, classmates and teammates.

Many adults in the Woonsocket area do not know how to swim and are terrified of the water. It's the 4th poorest city in Rhode Island, and many people do not have the financial means to support a family. This means that swim lessons are likely not a top priority for adults. With Lauren's leadership in adult swim lessons, we have seen huge growth in participation leading to three full adult beginner lessons this summer!

## ABOUT LAUREN

In her spare time, Lauren enjoys working out, playing with her dog, hanging out with friends, playing sports and participating in school clubs. She is a member of the National Honor Society and is involved in a number of service projects. Lauren is on a number of varsity and club sports teams year-round, but a highlight is her swim team at the YMCA.

Lauren's YMCA story started when she was six, taking swim lessons at the Y. She was scared of the water, but enjoyed making new friends. She learned to love the water, and competed in various YMCA championships. Because she was involved with the Y from such a young age, she grew to love the sense of community and decided it was the place for her first job. When she started at the Y, she was shy and nervous, but since then she has grown in every way. She loves working with hundreds of people each week, and values the strong relationships she's formed with members. Lauren has grown a strong sense of independence and finds pride in taking a leadership role with the Y. For Lauren, the Y is a place where anyone can come together to have a good time and better themselves and she feels a sense of pride working there.



# ANDREA MACIEL (she/her/they)

## AQUATICS & COMMUNITY PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**YMCA OF METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES**  
Mid/West Valley Family YMCA |  
Van Nuys and Reseda, California

Andrea is the epitome of an emerging leader. She has been a key partner in our YMCA's response to the pandemic and continues to push the envelope in our recovery efforts. She has helped to work around the clock to support our communities in this time of need.

In addition to all the community programs and efforts that Andrea was a key leader on, she also assumed the role of Regional Aquatics Director this past year to revive our struggling Aquatics program. She was able to rebuild her team at two different YMCAs, and provided the leadership and direction to grow our swim lesson program to almost pre-COVID numbers. She continues to be looked at as a leader not in only the Aquatics world of the LA Y but also among the whole LA Y in general.

Andrea was key in our YMCA receiving Senator Hertzberg's Nonprofit of the Year in 2021. Without her leadership to our branch, none of these accomplishments could have been achieved. She continues to be on the front lines in our work supporting our communities, was key in launching our food insecurity program and provided childcare leadership and support during our distance learning childcare, outreach efforts and support for our unsheltered members for our hygiene shower program, and has planned many of our community events for families and pets.

## ABOUT ANDREA

In her spare time, Andrea likes checking in on the community cats, spending time with family and friends, binge-watching Netflix shows, making candles and visiting National Parks. Her story began in 2006 at the Mid Valley YMCA when her mom enrolled Andrea and her twin brother in swim lessons. They soon became involved in the annual campaign for the aquatics department, and Andrea started volunteering in the computer room at 16. By age 20, she was offered a job as a swim instructor without any experience teaching kids how to swim but she fell in love with it, especially seeing the progress in each child. Andrea has the opportunity to learn about every department as she helped out, and knew the Y was where she wanted to be and to grow when she saw the different things the Y did for the community.





## **WELLINGTON BROWN JR.** (he/him) **AQUATICS DIRECTOR**

**METROPOLITAN YMCA OF THE ORANGES**  
East Orange YMCA | East Orange, New Jersey

Since coming on board the East Orange YMCA team, Wellington Brown Jr quickly sprang into action prioritizing enrollment growth, expansion, quality programming, and exceptional impact to our community. The drowning stats on children of color are astonishing. Drowning is the second leading cause of injury-related death of children and nearly 80% of drowning victims came from low-income families. Learning to swim is the best antidote to accidental drowning, but year after year, millions of families don't enroll their kids in swim lessons due to the financial impact.

Wellington's passion to change this narrative is seen and felt daily. He has spearheaded multiple Safety Around Water offerings, secured scholarships to support water safety and FREE swim lessons to our children and families, and has committed to providing FREE swim lessons twice a week for our summer campers. This past summer, he hosted the branch's first-ever swim meet, making our swim team dream closer to becoming a reality.

Our Y is lovingly named the "Small but Mighty Y" and Wellington's passion and commitment to aquatics has allowed us to gain momentum. He continues to work tirelessly to ensure that our children and families learn the life-saving skill of swimming. He has made our branch shine brighter and has created a lasting positive impact on our community.

Wellington is innovative in his approach to challenges with the goal of increasing exposure to our aquatics program and lifesaving swim skills. In addition, he was a leader in our Annual Support Campaign, and nurtured his staff to be leaders in this effort as well.

He serves as the chair of our Equity Committee, and participates in our DEI committee to ensure equitable access for our community members and an inclusive working environment for our staff.

### **ABOUT WELLINGTON**

Wellington is a friendly, fun-loving sports enthusiast with a passion for communities of color. He likes to stay very active and some of his hobbies include camping, football, rock climbing, swimming, obstacle course running, and archery. His favorite weekend activity is movie nights with friends and family. In his spare time, he likes to attend activities with his church mentoring program. He has worked for the YMCA over the past 6 years through childcare, wellness, and sports in various fulfilling roles. During that time, he found his passion for aquatics in 2018, and has made that his focus ever since. His mission in the East Orange YMCA swimming program, is to better the community's knowledge and confidence, in and around aquatics settings. Wellington takes great joy in seeing the difference he and his staff make in each and every one of their swimmer's lives.





# **CAILIN MILLER** (she/her)

## **YOUTH SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR**

**GRAND TRAVERSE BAY YMCA**  
Traverse City, Michigan

Cailin is a committed Y staff member with a passion for Youth Development. She has has an exciting career in camping first as a Camp Counselor, then an Assistant Director, and now as the Camp Director. She tirelessly hired 30 staff, trained them, and coordinated all events, activities, field trips, parent communication, etc. to provide the best summer ever to her campers. As one of the few camps that ran during COVID, Cailin overcame all obstacles throw her way to make sure camp ran. If you talk to anyone in her community, childcare is such a heavy need, and 200 camper spots fill up the day of registration within an hour. The impact she is making on these children's lives is immeasurable.

This year, Cailin was awarded the President's award, from her CEO. This is quite a prestigious award in her organization, as the CEO chooses someone who has gone above and beyond to meet the goals and mission of the Y.

In Cailin's commitment to DEI work lies her ability to find a space for all people regardless of their background and abilities. This past season, Cailin worked with an applicant who had tremendous passion to serve as a camp counselor but had diverse abilities that would not necessarily lend themselves to that role. Cailin pivoted and was innovative in creating a position for the applicant so that they could join the team while feeling like they belonged. The applicant was ecstatic to work for the Y, and every single day had the biggest smile interacting with the camp kids. Cailin is inclusive of all and exemplifies the mission statement 'for all' with staff and peers alike. She is known to create a safe space and develops genuine understanding and empathetic relationships with everyone.

### **ABOUT CAILIN**

In Cailin's free time, she enjoys being active; specifically, playing recreational sports such as softball, hockey, and running! During the summer months, she enjoys being on the water with my family. You'll often find her boating, wakeboarding, and swimming. In the winter, she tries to take advantage of the multiple outdoor activities that Northern Michigan has to offer. Her Y story started as a college student working as a summer camp counselor. She quickly connected with the Y's mission and was fortunate to become the Youth Sports Director! Over the past several years in her career, she has been fortunate to have the opportunity to serve the community she was raised in while being an advocate for youth development.



# KRISTEN SPRONZ (she/her)

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION MANAGER

**YMCA OF THE ROCKIES**  
Granby, Colorado

Kristen has been instrumental in the creation of a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) plan for YMCA of the Rockies. She has worked hard to create intentional partnerships with organizations that are dedicated to increasing access to and representation in outdoor spaces. In addition, she has been working to help identify areas where YMCA of the Rockies as an organization, has culturally appropriated from Indigenous cultures. She is helping to acknowledge the damage done through appropriation, and is supporting the Association in finding ways to educate staff and guests on what appropriation is and how we can move forward in right relations with our Indigenous neighbors. Kristen was instrumental in the creation of measurable goals in the YMCA of the Rockies' strategic plan, and is completing a capstone project on young peoples' role in community organizing with her participation in Y-USA's inaugural cohort of the Antiracist Multicultural Organization International Learning Institute (AMO-ILI).

Kristen represents YMCA of the Rockies on multiple county and national Boards and steering committees for both the diversity, equity and inclusion and marketing. She has continued to work on these Boards to help our communities come back stronger after these challenging times.

## ABOUT KRISTEN

Kristen's Y story started when she accepted a role with YMCA of the Rockies as the Brand Manager for Snow Mountain Ranch in 2016. In 2017, she was accepted to Y-USA's Emerging Global Leaders Institute (EGLI) which completely changed her view of and commitment to the Y. Kristen made lifelong friends, and was connected to a national and international movement she didn't know existed. EGLI developed her as a leader, and turned her into a Y person. This year, Kristen has had the opportunity to participate in the Y's Antiracist Multicultural Organization International Learning Institute (AMO-ILI) which deepened her commitment to the movement, and has reignited her passion for her role and for holding the YMCA accountable to truly being for all. In her free time, Kristen loves hiking, Nordic skiing, playing Spot It and not being able to say no to traveling whenever an opportunity arises.



# RACHAEL TRIMBLE (she/her)

## YOUTH & INCLUSION PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**GREATER GREEN BAY YMCA**  
East Side YMCA | Green Bay, Wisconsin

Rachael Trimble is a truly amazing person with the biggest heart and a strong passion for inclusivity. She is one of the strongest advocates I've met and her lends itself well to this passion as her programs specifically address inclusivity needs in our community.

She leads our adaptive programs for children with cognitive and/or physical disabilities, our D.R.E.A.M. programs (disability, recreation, experiences, and memories), and our Full Circle programs which provide recreational health and wellness opportunities to children who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder or other sensory processing challenges. I can confidently state as a peer and a community member that she is a consistent advocate, a courageous champion, and a tireless and passionate worker.

The Greater Green Bay community has very limited opportunities for children and teens with diverse abilities. Through our Y, Rachael has been constantly addressing that gap and continuously deepening our impact. Before she started, Green Bay had over 300 youth with various physical or cognitive disabilities without opportunities to build skills and confidence with physical, social and emotional well-being. She has identified ways to address those needs, and is constantly seeking to expand those opportunities and deepen our impact in the community.

Rachel's tireless efforts to meet families where they are, and address the needs they have has strengthened our community as a whole. Her programs are wildly popular and successful, and the families served rave about them. So often children and teens with diverse needs end up being left behind. I'm extremely proud that our Y is taking an active and growing role in providing services and addressing the needs of these populations. While we constantly have a waitlist for Rachel's programs (which speaks to their success, popularity, importance, and impact), she is always seeking ways to expand them and decrease that waitlist.

## ABOUT RACHAEL

Rachael's earliest childhood memories are from the Y, starting with swimming lessons, dance classes, day camps, and more! The Y became her first job at 15 years old in Child Watch and after a few years, she explored in other areas like front desk, greeting, and working in the summer school program. She took a leap of faith in 2021 and applied internally for an Inclusion Programming Coordinator position, thinking she was underqualified. To her surprise, she got the job! Within a year Rachael became the Youth and Inclusion Program Director and she truly gets to live her dream life every single day. Coming to work each day with such positive people is all she could ask for. She gets to watch those around her, youth, staff, and leaders, walk within their passion and talents and it is amazing to see. Rachael is happy she gets to be just a small piece of their journey. In her free time, she enjoys attending concerts, sporting events, cooking, and spending intentional time with her family/friends.



# **ALICIA BRAVO-NUNEZ** (she/her)

## **SENIOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF EARLY LEARNING**

**VALLEY OF THE SUN YMCA**  
Southwest Valley YMCA | Goodyear, Arizona

Within one year, Alicia has created an environment for families to feel comfortable leaving their children. She has created a village. She grew her preschool program from 6 to 40 students opening up two new classes. Alicia went through the Arizona state quality assessment for preschools which took extensive preparation, and led her team to the highest of quality, where they received a 5-star rating. She also has established various community partners with cities, professional development agencies, and local dance studios. Alicia has encouraged and inspired her peers to be top performers. Her diverse background and commitment to our youth and educators in the preschool are inspiring and seen throughout Valley of the Sun YMCA. Alicia promotes her team to develop their skills so while many preschools are facing a retention program and teacher shortage, her program thrives because of the positive culture she creates. Her program gets featured in the news often and parents' positive reviews are constant. While she exceeds in her position in Early Learning at Valley of the Sun YMCA, she also enjoys teaching dance classes and running a very successful dance program. Her ability to be committed to the Y values are never dulled all while growing her family!

Alicia partnered with Southwest Human Development to run a 10-month social-emotional project with her teachers, and partnered with Make Way for Books to create professional development opportunities for culturally appropriate books for children. In addition, she partnered with City of Litchfield Park to perform in the parade. Alicia helped to create a community garden where her program helps to take care of the plants. With this project her site was awarded the Champion of Young People Award presented by Arizona's First Things First.

Alicia creates an intentional and quality childcare program as the workforce returns following the pandemic. She also is very intentional in making sure her teachers feel cared for. Alicia enjoys working with families to gain resources in early intervention.

## **ABOUT ALICIA**

In her spare time, Alicia teaches dance classes and oversees two dance studios with her sisters. She also loves spending time with her family, her two boys, her husband and all of her nieces and nephews! Alicia's immediate family is a family of seventeen! They are definitely a dance family where they are all involved.





# GRACE TIERNEY (she/her)

## OUTDOOR CENTER DIRECTOR

### YMCA OF THE PINES

YMCA of the Pines Outdoor Center | Medford,  
New Jersey

As a recent hire at YMCA of the Pines, Grace entered the role of Outdoor Center Director. Grace was always viewed as having immense talent her enthusiasm about learning and growing has lent itself to her tremendous success in her short tenure in her role. Grace's relentless drive, work ethic, and emerging leadership skill have allowed her to provide for the incredible recovery, engagement, and reinvigoration of her department. Grace has a very bright future and is exactly the type of person the Y should be focused on cultivating and retaining.

Grace's department was decimated by the pandemic, as she manages conferences and retreat clients. Grace was able to rebuild the department which included not only the client base, but also the staff, culture, and program. Grace has achieved remarkable success, despite all odds, and in doing so exceeded an aggressive budget by 26% and is on pace to again exceed budget significantly in 2022. From a staffing standpoint, Grace has rebuilt her team and recruited new and diverse talent. The department is better staffed than it was pre-pandemic which is remarkable considering the national staffing shortage all are experiencing.

Grace has worked with various groups to find ways for youth and/or families to have developmental experiences together at camp, despite the economic and cultural turmoil of the past few years. When groups haven't had the ability to engage with the Y as they would have pre-pandemic, rather than turn them away, Grace would work with the group leaders to find ways to scale the experience to meet the group's objectives. Often, these groups are school districts, non-profits, and other community-serving organizations such that by providing opportunities to connect at camp, these groups are able to further their mission within their community with our support. Notably, programs that serve diverse populations such as special needs, diverse medical statuses, etc., all find a place with Grace as she will always ensure their ability to exist at camp.

## ABOUT GRACE

Grace started with the YMCA by going on a 6th grade overnight field trip to a camp in North Jersey in 2006. It changed her life - she attended the camp as a camper the next summer, went through their CIT program years later, became a counselor, seasonal director, naturalist for their outdoor education program, and more. After finishing college, she knew she wanted to pursue camping full-time, which is how she found myself at YMCA of the Pines. In her spare time, Grace likes to go hiking and camping. She is also a fiend for "trashy TV"!





# ANDREA TAYLOR (she/her)

## ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**VALLEY OF THE SUN YMCA**  
Chris-Town YMCA | Phoenix, Arizona

Growing up at the YMCA as a child of an employee, Andrea has worked for the Valley of the Sun YMCA for 11 years. A single mother at 19, and the mother of a child with special needs, she grew from her role as a part-time employee managing the struggles of being a professional working mother to transitioning into full-time employment. She recently married, blending her family with her husband, and has juggled all of this while being committed to her life's work at the Valley of the Sun YMCA.

Andrea received the 2018 Valley of the Sun YMCA Triangle Award for Membership Director of the Year. Additionally, she is a graduate of the YMCA Leadership Academy and Advanced Leadership Academy, and won the award for Top Staff Fundraising Campaign in 2019.

Andrea coordinated a collaboration with Mountain Park Health to provide vaccinations, dental care and sports physicals for more than 300 youth. Additionally, for the past five years she has successfully managed the Back to School drive for more than 250 deserving kids, securing partnerships with large retailers such as Target and Walmart, as well as with smaller local businesses. She partnered with Lutheran Social Services to provide early childhood and family resources, and served as Volunteer Manager for the Valley of the Sun YMCA Thanksgiving Food Drive and Togetherness Project. Lastly, Andrea is instrumental in the planning and organization of the Legacy Family Town YMCA Annual Community Trunk or Treat, partnering with multiple community organizations to ensure its success.

She worked tirelessly to ensure that the Emergency Childcare Service Program was successful for the Legacy Family Town YMCA, overseeing operations and safety protocols to ensure that families were receiving necessary childcare in the safest environment possible.

## ABOUT ANDREA

Andrea enjoys completing huge (2,000 – 5,000 piece) puzzles, especially when she's able to convince her two girls to do them with her. She categorizes her Y story in two directions. The first is when she started as a volunteer face painter, became a mom at 18 and through the Y learned to invest in and build herself into who she is today. The Y was there for her every step of the way. The second direction is when her daughter fell into a pool while she was with a family member in the middle of winter, jacket and boots included, and was able to stay afloat until help arrived. She was able to take swim lessons with the Y that saved her life that day all because someone gave to the Y and helped Andrea to afford them.



# JASON NAJERA (he/him)

## DIRECTOR OF AQUATICS & YOUTH SPORTS

**CHANNEL ISLANDS YMCA**  
Ventura Family YMCA | Ventura, California

Jason has grown his career at the Y – working at the YMCA for his first job, growing into an amazing Y frontline staff while completing his college degree, and now serves as an excellent director of multiple departments and continues to do whatever is needed for the Y and his community. Whenever he can, Jason helps to make the Y a better place.

Jason works with community partners to ensure YMCA programs are accessible to all and are truly meeting the needs of the community. For example, Jason's third grade learn to swim program with a local school district provides free swim lessons to those in 3rd grade low-income classes to combat drowning in the local community. Jason also works with a local foundation to provide free transportation and swim instruction to low-income private school families, serving almost 100 kids. Jason is also a part of the Operation Ventura program which provides free sports and aquatics programs to children in the foster system and in transitional living situations. Additionally, Jason designed and implemented an adaptive group swim lesson program to meet the needs of community members with diverse abilities and was awarded a Y-USA grant to pilot the program. The program is now offered each session as an additional option for students with diverse abilities on a regular basis.

Jason received the recognition of Rookie Director of the Year for the Channel Islands YMCA Association in 2022, after just under a year in his position. Jason has also earned many certifications in aquatics training programs and now teaches Lifeguard Certifications, Swim Instructor Facilitation Skills, and HSI courses as a trainer. Jason has also been awarded the Cause Driven Leader of the month multiple times for the Venture Family YMCA branch.

## ABOUT JASON

Jason's first YMCA experience was as a kid where he participated in the swim lesson program. Jason vividly remembers his experiences in the program and remembers the Y to be a very welcoming place. When Jason was fourteen, he began his career at the Y as a volunteer assistant swim team coach for the Dolphins, the same team he swam for as a child. Shortly after, Jason became a swim instructor and lifeguard, and he now oversees the Aquatics and Sports Departments for the same pool that he started his YMCA journey in and has been loving it ever since.



# ALEXIS LOPEZ (she/her)

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR

**YMCA OF THE SUNCOAST**  
Clearwater YMCA in Motion | Clearwater, Florida

Alexis first started at the YMCA in late 2020 as the Membership Manager but her work ethic, friendliness, and wellness expertise quickly made an impact allowing growth into the role of Member Engagement Director by January of 2021. This role supervises both Membership and Wellness Departments. She has been able to lead and motivate our branch around a common vision and goals while balancing membership and wellness.

Under Alexis' leadership, membership grew and member retention hit an all-time high of over 60%. This was a direct result of focusing on friendliness and a welcoming environment within our staff teams. Alexis systematically worked with the staff teams to ensure every new member was reached with a meaningful connection and experience focused on their goals. In December of 2021, Alexis was recognized as one of the YPN Chapter 27 Class of 2022 Rising Stars.

The Clearwater YMCA was sold to a school for children with neuro diversities and while it was a difficult change for the community, Alexis approached this as a team player. She will lead any program or class that is needed for the community and is a certified Livestrong at the YMCA instructor, a NASM Certified Personal Trainer, a YMCA Weight Loss facilitator and lifeguard. You may recognize her as one of the instructors to first record a group exercise video for our virtual platform, YMCA360.

Alexis serves on the Board of Directors for Family Promise of Pinellas County, which is working to prevent and end family homelessness. She plans free community events that are open to members and non-members such as outdoor group exercise classes, family movie nights, raffles for special events/holidays, and group exercise parties/bashes. Her team is also working with partners to provide services to more of our community through running programs like Livestrong at the YMCA at a local recreation center. Alexis is constantly making positive impact in our community both in the YMCA and through partnerships.

## ABOUT ALEXIS

Alexis grew up working out at a YMCA and her passion for health and fitness continued into college where she majored in nutrition and fitness and athletic coaching. She continued her education through earning a M.S. in exercise science and health promotion. She wanted to connect her passions of health and fitness and helping others, so she immediately thought of working at the YMCA based on her childhood experiences. She felt that there has always been a sense of belonging at the Y, which has continued through her time working here. She hopes to continue to grow her passion and career with the Y. In her spare time, she enjoys working out and spending time with her two dogs and her family. She also enjoys training for triathlons and running events.



# ISAIAH TERAN (he/him)

## SENIOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**VALLEY OF THE SUN YMCA**  
Tempe Family YMCA | Phoenix, Arizona

Isaiah has been the definition of consistency and dedication at the Valley of the Sun YMCA since joining the Association in December of 2019 after time with both the Anaheim YMCA and the YMCA of Orange County.

Isaiah stabilized the childcare program at the Tempe Family YMCA, increasing the program's enrollment from 25 to 45 kids. He has made a flawless transition from childcare into his current role in Membership and Wellness, taking both departments under his supervision while demonstrating tremendous and rapid growth. He is a leader amongst the branch's team and approaches each day with an infectious energy that motivates his peers.

He cares deeply about his community and is committed to serving as a positive male role model to those in the afterschool program. He also serves as a personal trainer for many within our active adult community, providing them with resources and confidence.

Isaiah developed a relationship with local organizations to provide resources and positive educational experiences for kids in the after school childcare program. One example of this work is the relationship with a local community garden where children get to learn about the process of growing their own food.

## ABOUT ISAIAH

In his spare time, Isaiah enjoys being active in the outdoors with his fiancé and their two dogs. He enjoys using exercise and weight lifting to release and regain energy in his daily life. Isaiah's Y story started when he was working in an afterschool program while going to school. This is when he accidentally stumbled upon his passion and purpose to help others in a different environment. He started as a counselor for an afterschool program at a junior high school level, then expanded into different levels including elementary school, high school, and private schools. Isaiah became the Child Care Director for the YMCA of Orange County and made his way to the Valley of the Sun YMCA. Here, he continued his passion in childcare and let his strengths continue in other departments. Currently, he serves as the Senior Program Director at the Tempe Family YMCA.





# **HANNAH BARTLOME** (she/her)

## **DIRECTOR OF YOUTH & FAMILY PROGRAMMING**

**YMCA OF GREATER CLEVELAND**  
French Creek YMCA | Avon, Ohio

I have watched Hannah grow from a program coordinator to a full-time director and she has grown into a director that I envisioned that she could be. She has taken on some of our largest programs in our Association and accepted the challenge make them better and grow them at the same time. Hannah become a shining star amongst her peers all while coaching high school soccer. She has put countless hours on the road and miles on her car giving 100% to her soccer team and her YMCA programs. Hannah would work almost a full day at the Y, drive to coach her soccer team and then drive back to the Y to meet with the parents of her volleyball league or close the building as the night time Cause Driven Leader on Duty. She did all this while working to receive her Master's Degree.

Hannah was the Cleveland Cavaliers 2021 Jr. NBA Coach of the year for our Jr. Cavs program which included being recognized by the Cavs as being nominated to the national pool of coaches across the country. She was also able to partner with the Avon Crushers Baseball team for use of their stadium daily for our Specialty Camps.

Hannah grew our summer camp program by 110 kids over last summer and created a reward system called Play with Purpose which allowed for kids to learn our core values. The parents' feedback was very positive and at the end of the day, campers were all recognized for exhibiting the core values.

She inherited our Lorain Basketball Program which is set in a low-income area of Lorain. This program grew from just a place to play basketball to working with law enforcement to help create a relationship needed in the community. Local government officials attended, getting voter registration information for all those that attended. This program grew to adding adult basketball and small group basketball youth skill development. All this took place in an area that most had turned their backs on.

## **ABOUT HANNAH**

Hannah's Y story comes full circle. From 1998-2002 she was an active participant in Vermilion Family YMCA youth programming; preschool, before and after school care. The YMCA is also where she first learned about and played organized sports; soccer, t-ball, basketball, gymnastics, track and field, and swim lessons. All of these programs proved to have been instrumental in her life path and character development-as an athlete and a leader. As a Youth and Family Director, Hannah works to enhance all of these exact programs that she participated in; programs that helped guide and shape her into who she is today. Now, 23 years later, she even works alongside her former YMCA pre-school teacher. Outside of the YMCA, she coaches soccer and track at Vermilion High School. Her hobbies include reading, learning, and implementing strategies to better motivate and inspire all people to reach their highest character potential.





# **GUNNAR MADISON** (he/him)

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS DIRECTOR**

**YMCA OF ITHACA AND TOMPKINS COUNTY**  
Ithaca, New York

Gunnar shows amazing drive, initiative and out-of-the-box thinking. Time and again, he has stepped forward, getting Y-USA trainer certified, becoming a trainer in multiple disciplines in order to help his own YMCA as well as those across the state. He recently completed his Introduction to Listen First Trainer Certification, is scheduled to be a trainer candidate for Y-Weight Loss and Healthy Heart Ambassador and has championed to bring Livestrong at the Y to his Association. He has launched Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring, a Y Weight Loss Program, and a falls-prevention course, "A Matter of Balance," all in his short two years at his Association.

During his time, Gunnar has built strong partnerships with the state and county departments of health, the county office for aging, local medical practices, other nonprofits, and senior centers in an effort to get the YMCA's work out into the community.

Gunnar also serves as the liaison with the Association's largest health system, Cayuga Health Systems, and established direct referrals into evidence-based health intervention programming from Cayuga Health System providers.

He is a member of the local Population Health Coalition which is comprised of nonprofits, the health department and Cayuga Health Systems. The coalition is focused on removing barriers to access for those with chronic conditions and on increasing participation in evidence-based programming through collaboration with other organizations and outreach and empowerment opportunities.

Gunnar has personally helped over 75 individuals manage a chronic condition through evidence-based health intervention programs this year.

## **ABOUT GUNNAR**

From learning to swim at his hometown Y, volunteering at his current Y during his undergraduate career at Cornell, to working as the Health and Wellness Director, the Y has been a mainstay of Gunnar's life. He is excited to continue his Y story as the Senior Program Director! Gunnar is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Public Health at the University at Buffalo, where he is focusing on developing expertise in health promotion and community health. Outside of the Y, he enjoys exploring local hiking trails with his partner and dog, Pixel, visiting the wineries of the Finger Lakes, and going on cruises with friends and family.



# **CARLY MECL** (she/her)

## **Y-CAP PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

**YMCA OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE**  
YMCA Community Action Programs | Nashville, Tennessee

Carly is a valued team member with a deep passion for youth development. She shows up every day for her staff and her students. Carly has held multiple positions within our Association, but currently oversees our Prevention Program for middle school students, empowering students daily to identify and cope with their emotions, build positive identity, and strengthen relationships.

In addition to running multiple after school program sites, Carly was a previous co-chair of the Emerging Leaders Resource Network for our Association.

Carly is all about community and relationship building! This past school year, she partnered with another local nonprofit, Youth in Action, to provide her students opportunities to address a need in their community and to come up with a solution to the problem. Through this partnership, our students were able to visit a near-by elementary school and teach their students about recycling and the importance of keeping our communities clean. Carly is a champion for educational and economic equity for her students.

## **ABOUT CARLY**

Carly has been a YMCA employee for a third of her life! She started as a childcare lead and summer camp counselor at the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities (now YMCA of the North). After volunteering as a Y-Literacy tutor in Nashville her senior year, she knew the YMCA of Middle Tennessee was special, and since 2016 she has worked in youth development in both Clarksville and Nashville, TN. Carly has been honored to serve hundreds of K-8th grade youth both before and after school, as well as in various summer day camps and even virtual programming. Outside of the Y, Carly enjoys reading, traveling, and attending Nashville concerts and sporting events (Go 'Dores)!



# GAGE BECK (he/him)

## GRANTS MANAGER

**GREATER GREEN BAY YMCA**  
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Gage works tirelessly to identify needs throughout the community and pursues funding and partnerships to help address those needs. His indomitable spirit, unceasing pursuit of betterment, and unending positive attitude make him an invaluable asset to our association. Gage has brought in enormous amount of grants to our association that enables us to meet our community needs.

Gage has developed an understanding of our local, state, and national government and an impressive network of representatives at all of those levels. In addition to government bodies and officials, he also is extremely well tapped-into the local business leaders' network throughout Green Bay. Gage's charisma, leadership, and intelligence have earned him the utmost respect in our association.

One of the biggest barriers to addressing community needs is often a matter of funding. With Gage's efforts, many programs are able to be developed, leading to so many community needs being truly addressed. Without Gage, we would not be able to take on a large number of the projects. Gage is constantly involved and seeks to reflect on how we can continuously improve these various programs as well as deepen our impact.

## ABOUT GAGE

The Y has always been a part of Gage's life. As a kid, he took swim lessons and helped stuff envelopes while his mom worked at the front desk in financial development department. While in college, he became an intern, and transitioned to a full-time role after graduation. The Y gave Gage a place to grow as a kid, and now allows him to grow as a professional. He spends his free time baking, cycling, and making ceramics.



# **ABBHEY WOLSKI** (she/her)

## **FOOD SERVICE MANAGER**

**YMCA OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO**  
YMCA Camp Duncan | Ingleside, Illinois

Abbey has been an absolute Rockstar for YMCA Camp Duncan and Camp Independence. She came into a kitchen that had no true leadership for well over a year and took over. In her first year she has shown an ability to adapt to the daunting schedule of a year-round overnight camp kitchen and has found innovative ways to save on expenses and to increase customer and camper satisfaction.

Coming into her role, Abbey had limited training due to the specific nature of her job, but this didn't stop her from learning the ropes and working tirelessly to ensure the success of her department. In the past, international staff served as support, but with Abbey, they were able to take leadership roles in cooking, serving, and cleaning. Staff satisfaction in the Food Service department reached an all-time high.

Abbey works so hard to get the job done and even manages to sneak in special treats for the staff from time to time. In addition, she purchases the "imperfect" veggies so they don't go to waste, and has switched our staple meal, pizza, from frozen to made by hand while still saving money. She is always happy to accommodate special dietary needs and collaborates with the American Diabetes Association dieticians.

After her first year in the role, she has big ideas for the future. She has identified opportunities to teach campers about nutrition and allow for hands-on learning opportunities. Abbey goes above and beyond to accommodate campers and their families because she knows it's the right thing to do. We are so very fortunate to have someone at Camp Duncan and Camp Independence who is as caring and passionate as Abbey!

## **ABOUT ABBHEY**

While this is Abbey's first year working for the YMCA, she started working for summer camps when she was 14 years old. Her love of camp and recreation inspired her to get a degree in Recreation Management at Illinois State University along with a minor in Music with a focus on Trumpet Performance. In her spare time, Abbey likes to cook, bake, read, and hang out with her two pet rabbits.





## COURTNEY KRAMOLIS (she/her) FOOD PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**LA CROSSE AREA FAMILY YMCA**  
Dahl YMCA | La Crosse, Wisconsin

Courtney has been imperative when it comes to making sure children and families in our community are getting fed. Between our school-age programs, summer food service, and community health workers' clients, she has gone above and beyond in meeting their needs. She often talks about how she loves her job because she just wants to make sure people are fed, and has said on multiple occasions that "I just don't want people to feel hungry".

Courtney established and grew our Y's food pantry which includes food and hygiene products. Courtney has partnered with the local Salvation Army and Hunger Task Force to be able to provide meals throughout the community. She coordinated volunteers to deliver meals not only to our 10-summer school age care sites, but also to 11 other locations to reach those that needed it most.

One of the biggest populations in need in our community is the unsheltered population. Currently, there is a park that has been converted into a "campground" that hosts the majority of this population. Courtney worked with Hunger Task Force and utilized resources to bring meals to this population each week during the summer and continuing into the fall. Each week she was able to serve around 150 meals to individuals that otherwise may not have had food. Her work and commitment are truly remarkable.

### ABOUT COURTNEY

Courtney serves as the La Crosse Area Family YMCA Food Program Director and is responsible for the coordination of all food access related resources. In addition to overseeing the daily operations of the program, she is also responsible for partnership cultivation. Courtney's Y story is very special. From swim lessons at 5 years old, Y summer camps, volunteering and her very first job, the Y has always been a place she found a sense of home.

Courtney is proud to be able to develop and maintain relationships within the community to provide an immediate impact for those affected by food insecurity. As a sign of a true leader, she is consistent in acknowledging that she could not make all of this happen without the dedicated team of individuals such as the self-dubbed "Food Crew", the SAC Department and many community partnerships.

Her philosophy is that healthy choices can also be good-tasting ones and she enjoys teaching others about food, and about how to make nutritious lifestyle choices. On a personal note, when not at work, you can find her spending time with her husband Trevor and their two dogs, Chuck and Ruby. They enjoy hiking, golfing, and spending hours at the dog park! Born and raised in Madison, WI Courtney has really loved relocating to an area with so much to do and explore outside!

# SELECTION PANEL



**KESHON BENNETT**

**DIRECTOR OF YOUTH  
DEVELOPMENT, OUTREACH  
AND SPORTS**  
Princeton YMCA  
Princeton, New Jersey



**JAMIE BRUNING-  
MILES**

**PRESIDENT AND CEO**  
YMCA of San Francisco  
San Francisco, California



**JESSICA CAREY**

**MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT  
AND PROGRAM DIRECTOR**  
Kent County Family YMCA  
Chestertown, Maryland



**ROMAN DAVIS**

**SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Old Colony YMCA  
Taunton, Massachusetts



**CHRISTOPHER  
JEFFERSON**

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**  
YMCA of Metropolitan Los  
Angeles  
Los Angeles, California



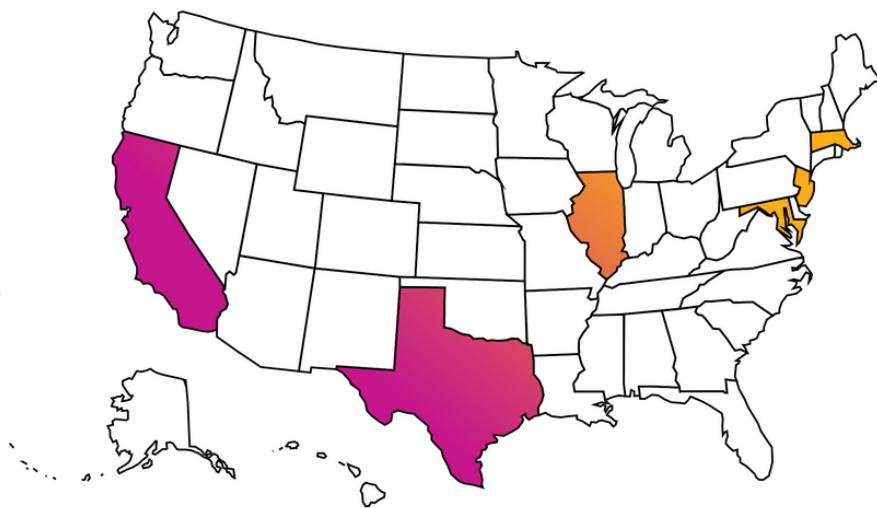
**LIZ KRYZNEFSKI**

**YOUTH AND FAMILY  
DIRECTOR**  
YMCA of Austin  
Austin, Texas



**THEODORE  
PETERSON**

**SR. RISK ANALYST -  
AQUATICS SAFETY**  
YMCA of Metro Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois



# DEMOGRAPHICS

## SELECTION PANEL

ELRN shares our sincere gratitude for the selection panel for our 5th annual 30 Under 30 award cycle. In this important anniversary year, we provided special attention to the structure of our process to ensure that it was representative of the DEI lens that was used throughout. We were intentional about the compilation of our selection panel, which helped to provide a balanced and equitable selection of 30 key YMCA leaders. Here are some highlights about our selection panel:

- Geographic Location – the panel represents all major regions of the USA
- Gender Identity – the panel is comprised of individuals of binary and non-binary gender expression
- Race & Ethnicity – the representation of BIPOC communities and immigrant backgrounds for a balanced panel was prioritized
- Y-USA ERG Representation – the panel represents dimensions of diversity that are championed by Y-USA's six employee resource groups
- Hierarchal Leadership & Departmental Diversity – to ensure a true peer review, the committee includes Y staff from all areas of the organizational chart from director to chief executive officer and to ensure no one specific area of work would be favored, the panel includes individuals with a background in various program and administrative departments of the Y

## AWARDEES

ELRN is proud to recognize the diversity represented in our 5th annual 30 Under 30 class. The statement, "the Y is for all", truly illustrates itself in this year's class. As future leaders of the Y movement, we can all rejoice in knowing that their unique perspectives, influenced by their dimensions of diversity, will shape an ever changing and ever evolving Y Movement that truly addresses each community's unique needs.

In addition to geographic diversity, this year's class represents various dimensions of diversity including:

- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Ethnic and Racial Identity
- Religious Practices
- Immigration Status
- Hierarchal Leadership Role
- Departmental Diversity
- Educational Background

A key takeaway that ELRN hopes Y leaders have by flipping through this booklet is that no one specific mix of backgrounds and identities creates the "perfect" Y leader. This year's class represents 30 extremely talented changemakers destined to lead YMCA associations through the future of our movement. In accordance with our #NextGenNeeds document, ELRN's goal is to impart on Y leaders the importance of diversifying staff teams, uplifting the "underdogs", and prioritizing the development of all emerging leaders.

**CELEBRATING  
5 YEARS OF**

**30  
UNDER  
30**



Given that community is at the center of all YMCA activity, we believe it is critical for Y leaders to understand they are not alone in their service. ELRN is a community that exists to deepen the commitment, connection, and above all passion next-generation leaders have for the Y movement. We do this to sustain and strengthen the legacy of the YMCA, ensuring that future generations will continue to be inspired to serve through the Y.