

South Shore

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SOUTH SHORE



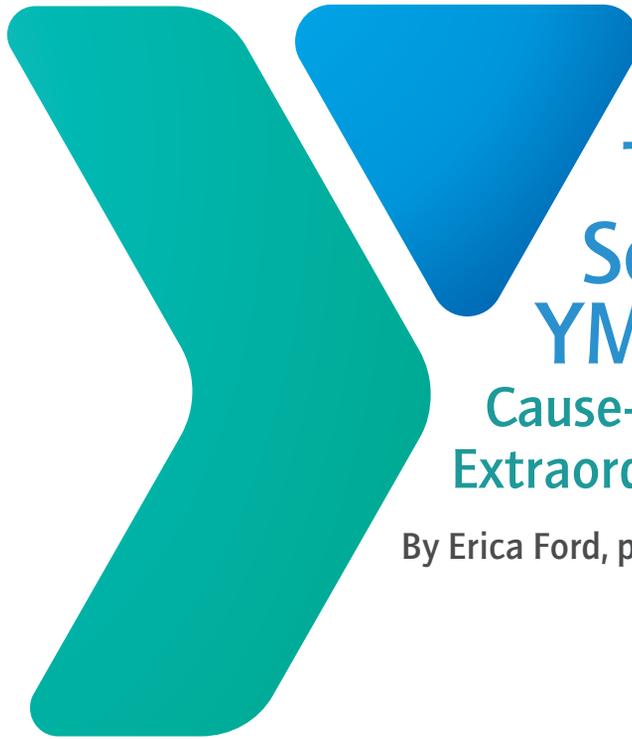
YMCA

the

The Better You
Belongs Here.

feature article





The South Shore YMCA:

Cause-Driven Leadership. Extraordinary Community Impact.

By Erica Ford, photos by Kerry Riordan

For more than 125 years, local residents have turned to the South Shore YMCA to become their better selves through programs designed to build healthy spirits, minds and bodies. From a small turn-of-the-century building in downtown Quincy to today's far-reaching collection of branches and program sites, the Y has expanded in size and scope to impact the lives of more than 60,000 local community members each year, making it one of the largest YMCA associations in the country.

Over the last decade, the number of community members that the SSYMCA supports has more than doubled under the leadership of current President and CEO, Paul Gorman. Gorman's long-time interests in athletics and giving back have been the driving force throughout his career path. Prior to his YMCA career, Gorman founded a not-for-profit, universally designed athletic facility where everyone, regardless of physical ability, could participate and feel welcome. After undertaking large capital campaigns to build the new Burbank and Lynch-van Otterloo YMCAs on the North Shore, Paul Gorman became determined to expand and revitalize another community center with access for all, this time on the South Shore. When he arrived, the existing Quincy Y, a



central institution for the City of Presidents, had seen its day come and go as a facility. Built in 1955, it was deemed undersized for the local population by 1968. By 2010, the South Shore was in dire need of a new facility, one that would reflect the changing demographics of the region.

“The South Shore YMCA was a natural fit for my background,” says Gorman. “The opportunities for growth on the South Shore were ripe, and although it was a bit daunting to build on an already-successful organization, there was a chance to work alongside community leaders, partners and supporters alike to harness a shared vision for continued growth.”

Former SSYMCA board chair Mark Dickinson remembers his first meeting with Gorman. “The Y is a huge community asset. I can’t imagine the Quincy or Hanover communities without the South Shore YMCA,” he said. “There’s so much life and public good that comes out of the YMCA. It’s wonderful.” And thus, there was an almost parental sense of the need to protect the organization. When Gorman attended his first meeting as CEO, Dickinson was interested to see how he would react to the scope of the proposed capital project to create a new Quincy Y. “The 2008 recession had hit us all pretty hard, and we were thinking that we may need to scale back what we were planning. But I’ll never forget it. Paul looked at it and said, ‘We need to be thinking bigger.’”

Bigger included better. To accurately support the South Shore community, the Quincy Y had to mirror that community and its needs. Quincy itself had undergone a major demographics explosion since the early 1980s. By 2013, Quincy was both the “most Irish city in America” and the home of the fastest-growing population of Asian-American families in Massachusetts. The Y had to include people of varying descents, in every way possible, from multilingual teachers in the facility’s State Street Early Learning Center to the inclusion of community organizations like Quincy Asian Resources in discussions on programs that would directly benefit all.

The concept of “one door that swings open continually” for the residents of Quincy goes back to the organization’s founding documents. Its spirit is encapsulated in the South Shore Y’s mission statement, “The better you belongs here.” That spirit of inclusiveness and welcoming stretches beyond nationalities to include all.

“Every single member of our community should have access to our facilities and programs,” says Gorman. “And if they do not have the means, whether that is financially, physically or otherwise, we are prepared to help meet them where they are. All of the support for the South Shore Y helps us to deepen our impact, and to ensure that no one is turned away.” Led by Gorman’s fundraising strategies, the South Shore YMCA annually raises \$3 million to return to all the communities we serve as financial assistance applicable to any Y program or service.

Adhering to that vision, Gorman refocused the Y’s efforts to meet seven causes head-on. Some are longstanding national YMCA themes, like water safety, social services that meet basic needs, and the benefits of summer camp opportunities for kids. Others shine lights on underserved communities. Inclusion programs at the Y welcome individuals with developmental disabilities to explore their passions, from sports to self-expression through the arts.





The Partnership program links an individual living with a physical disability to a dedicated volunteer who will do whatever it takes to help that individual stay fit, from helping with specialized fitness equipment to working out on the next machine over to provide interactive social support. Medical Wellness programs give the South Shore's physicians the ability to "Prescribe the Y," offering their patients instant access to several categories of donor supported evidence-based health interventions: fall prevention, cardiac maintenance, weight management, diabetes prevention, Parkinson's exercise and more.



The Y's newest initiative, Staystrong, is a free year-long program for cancer patients, survivors, caregivers and household family members that holistically encompasses programs that strengthen the spirit, mind and body for all involved.

The program will provide enrichment opportunities and drop-in childcare for children whose parents are undergoing treatment, family-focused physical and educational activities, nutritional resources, guidance and classes, and spiritual growth through the exploration of faith.



Gorman attributes the success of the South Shore Y to many. It takes a strong community – of staff, of donors, of volunteers - to help a community like the South Shore grow. Champions like Rob and Karen Hale, and Herb and Paulie Emilson, understand the Y's vision and help it achieve its goals. "People come to the Y seeking personal fulfillment. It's a powerful motivator," Herb Emilson says. "The YMCA supports the wholesomeness and well-being of our communities from the ground up."

For local businesses, especially those serving the same local population, a robust Y presence means a strong community. "We believe in the importance of having a strong YMCA in our community providing so many great programs in support of the well-being of our members," shares James Dunphy, CEO of South Shore Bank. "A vibrant and healthy community helps all individuals and companies prosper."



"The South Shore YMCA serves to make everyone feel empowered and included," says Suzanne Stefany, Immediate Past Chair of the South Shore YMCA Executive Board. "They're the one charity that truly reaches all community members regardless of age, background, or any kind of profile. The impact the Y has is tangible, meaningful, and powerful. Everyone can find something that resonates with them at the South Shore Y."

Gorman believes that further strengthening the South Shore Y's ability to reach all members of the community must be achieved through a process of digging deeper than ever before into societal

needs. The Y has historically reacted to those needs, some of which are entirely cyclical. In Quincy in 1900, that meant providing Swedish-to-English lessons for workers at the Fore River Shipyard; today it's the translation of program materials into Mandarin and Cantonese. But new needs arise all the time, from a call for programs for youths with Autism to STEM education opportunities for underserved youths to creating gardens out of urban and suburban landscapes to provide fresh produce for food pantries.

Under Gorman's guidance, impact, relevancy and sustainability are the focus of the SSYMCA's vision for the future. "Continuing to offer our programs and services to as many as possible will always be my goal," said Gorman. "Anything to do with children is a positive investment in our community's future, and from our Early Learning Centers to Camp, each of these opportunities instill and reinforce positive character development, a trait that will stay with these children and their families for the rest of their lives. We just celebrated our 125th anniversary and we're looking forward to the next 125. As long as there are community members in need of support or in search of personal fulfillment, however they define it, the South Shore YMCA will be there to meet them wherever they are."

But, he knows, the Y will never achieve its goals without broad community support. "I encourage you to think about your legacy, because those who define these stories today write our history of tomorrow. Where will you leave your mark?"

SOUTH SHORE YMCA. The Better You Belongs Here.

To join, volunteer, donate, get involved or learn more, visit ssymca.org. 781.264.9400. **SSM**



WATER SAFETY. The Y is the leader in providing lifesaving water safety education and skills to the South Shore community, empowering all to swim safely and confidently.



MEDICAL WELLNESS AND PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM. Bridging the gap between clinical and community care, these programs help everyone enjoy all the Y has to offer.



INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING. The Y's programming for individuals with developmental/intellectual disabilities engage participants in wellness activities while fostering individual growth.



SOCIAL SERVICES. The Y provides programs and services, from food pantry to educational support, helping local individuals and families in need or at risk.



FARM AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION. The SSYMCA's farms provide opportunities to learn about the environment and harvest food from seed to plate.



CAMP. For decades, the Y's quality resident and day camps have provided children with access to safe spaces to explore the outdoors and discover their talents.



EARLY LEARNING AND AFTERSCHOOL. Across the South Shore, children from infancy to elementary school are provided with a safe, enriching environment where they can learn, grow and thrive.

SOUTH SHORE YMCA LOCATIONS

SOUTH SHORE YMCA ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

Corporate Office
141 Longwater Drive, Suite 110, Norwell /
781.264.9400

EMILSON YMCA BRANCH

75 Mill Street, Hanover / 781.829.8585

QUINCY YMCA BRANCH

79 Coddington Street, Quincy / 617.479.8500

CAMP BURGESS & HAYWARD RESIDENT CAMP

75 Stowe Road, Sandwich / 508.428.2571

EARLY LEARNING CENTER – HANOVER

1075 Washington Street, Hanover / 781.826.7900

EARLY LEARNING CENTER – NORTH QUINCY

One Heritage Drive, Quincy / 857.403.4784

LAURA'S CENTER FOR THE ARTS

97 Mill Street, Hanover / 781.829.8585 x8335

GERMANTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

366 Palmer Street, Quincy / 617.376.1384

GYMNASTICS CENTER

1075 Washington Street, Hanover / 781.829.8585 x8236

SOUTH SHORE NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER

48 Jacobs Lane, Norwell / 781.659.2559

STATE STREET EARLY LEARNING CENTER – QUINCY YMCA

79 Coddington Street, Quincy / 617.479.8500 x4721

ZONEWELLNESS

141 Longwater Drive, Assinippi Park, Norwell
781.264.9488

     www.ssymca.org