

A Brief History of the YMCA



The Young Men's Christian Association was created in 1844 in London, England by Mr. George Williams. Williams created the YMCA to assist young men with reinforcing the Christian principals that had been developed in rural areas of England. During the post-industrial revolution, thousands of young men were moving to live and work in London. These young men worked under very poor working conditions. Williams felt the need to encourage these men to meet, develop relationships, and build and maintain a strong values system, which was and still is important to the sustainment of life in a difficult environment.

The YMCA movement spread very quickly in Europe, before traveling to North America in 1851. The first YMCA in America was established in Montreal, Canada in the summer of that same year. In December of 1851 the first YMCA in the U.S. was established in Boston, Massachusetts. The speed with which the YMCA movement spread in this country is fascinating. The YMCA of Pasadena (Santa Anita YMCA's mothering association) was created 35 years later in 1886. The SAFY has been serving neighboring communities for several decades, initially as a small store front operation; but, the SAFY facility in Monrovia was not built until 1984. This 34,000-square foot building is a full-service facility, equipped with a basketball gym, racquetball courts, sauna, whirlpool, weight room, cardiovascular room, and pool.

The Santa Anita YMCA became an independent branch on November 16, 1999. The SAFY was established more than 50 years ago to provide quality programs and services to the community. The organization offers a wide range of activities that include sports, fitness and specialized programs.

Our Youth Sports program features basketball, soccer, swimming, karate, and sports camp. Our Child Care program is one of the most inexpensive quality programs in the area. We work hand in hand with CCIS, GAIN, and NET.

Our Fitness program includes body compositions, personalized training, a full range of weight equipment, three racquetball courts, and a full cardiovascular room. We also offer fitness programs that include six different types of aerobics classes ranging from beginner to challenging. We also offer Parkinson's Exercise, Yoga, Fit-for-Life, Morning Stretch, Swimnastics, and swim lessons for children as well as adults.

Our specialized programs target infants, seniors, at-risk youth and the physically and mentally challenged. We offer a Parent/Tot program to improve water safety. The Twinges in the Hinges class is certified by the Arthritis Foundation. The Multiple Sclerosis class offers a specialized water exercise class. The Sunshine Company in conjunction with the City of Monrovia offers the use of the facility to the mentally challenged. We also offer pool time for our local Special Olympics Swim Team.

We are part of the Monrovia Youth and Family Network, a partnership between the City of Monrovia, the Monrovia School District, the Boys and Girls Club, and the YMCA. We combine our efforts and resources to serve the community. We share staff, funding and programming to better serve the area. Some of our annual programs include the Spring Egg Hunt, track meet, the Halloween Festival and Summer Extravaganza that served over 600 children last summer.

In our efforts to fulfill community needs, we continue to establish tailor-made programs. Our Community Outreach Program includes a free monthly youth night which is partially funded through the L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services support program, a Chaplain-on-Site (non-denominational) and a Resource Reference Center.

There are some interesting facts which should be mentioned about the YMCA. It is the largest non-profit organization in this country. Furthermore, the YMCA is the second largest occupier of space in the nation after the federal government. In the USA, YMCAs are the largest provider of child care, youth sports, and aquatic programs. The YMCA assumes credit for the creation of a number of different activities, such as: basketball, volleyball, racquetball, professional football, and the establishment of indoor soccer. YMCAs are currently established in 30 nations throughout the globe and serve over 30 million members.

To this day the mission statement of the YMCA has not changed. It still reads: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.