



## In A Heartbeat A Life is Saved at the Metro-Central YMCA

For almost thirty years, the Metro-Central YMCA was at the heart of Mark Smyka's life. Then the YMCA was there when he needed it most—when his heart stopped beating.

A dedicated fitness enthusiast, Mark was a familiar face at the Metro-Central YMCA, working out as often as six times a week. On July 31st, 2006, he found himself in exactly the right place at the right time, thanks to the defibrillator acquired by the YMCA in September, 2003.

"Had I been anywhere else but the YMCA," Smyka says, "it would have been curtains."

The machine was part of a generous gift to the YMCA of Greater Toronto by the Mikey Network ([www.mikeynetwork.com](http://www.mikeynetwork.com)). To maintain certification of the machines, now found at all YMCA HFR centres, staff must re-train every three months. In Mark Smyka's time of need, that effort proved infinitely worthwhile.

On that particular Monday, Mark was completing a "recovery run" after successfully completing a 15-mile marathon the day before. He was cleaning the treadmill for the next YMCA member when his heart developed a near-fatal arrhythmia.

Lesley Davidson, General Manager of the Metro-Central YMCA, was on the front lines of the response team when Mark Smyka collapsed. After assessing that Mark's heart had stopped, Davidson and her team successfully hooked up the defibrillator and re-started Mark's heart.

"We were well-trained to use the defibrillator, and it worked!" Davidson says. "I do think that the staff of YMCA HFR centres are very well-prepared



Mark Smyka thanks the YMCA team who saved his life! From left to right: Al Freeman, Gilah McHugh, Anita San Martin, Mark Smyka, Allison Smyka, Zaid Murakami, Brian Robertson, Lesley Davidson, Robert Taylor, Emily Best.

to handle emergencies. If you're going to have something like this happen, you want it to happen at the YMCA."

The staff at St. Michael's Hospital were impressed by the expert response provided by the YMCA. As a result of the team's immediate action, Mark suffered no lasting effects from the crisis and was back at work a week later.

Throughout his life, Mark Smyka has considered the YMCA his second home. While traveling on business, the communications writer routinely seeks out hotels that are close to YMCAs so he can maintain his fitness regimen. The YMCA is a key part of his family's life as well. His father-in-law, at age 87, has been a member of the North Bay YMCA for fifty years.

"He has often said that the YMCA saved his life," Mark says. "Now I'm sure he'll accuse me of one-upmanship!"

In November, Mark hosted a reception at the Westbury Hotel to thank

the staff of the Metro-Central YMCA who saved his life.

It was an important opportunity for people to re-connect with Mark and strengthen their very special bond. Smyka says that during his recovery period, he has been truly moved by the outpouring of concern he's received from YMCA staff.

"There is a genuine relationship there," Mark says, when describing his connection to the people at the Metro-Central YMCA. "They didn't realize how important the YMCA was in my life," he says, "and I didn't realize that the feeling was mutual." ▼

### Did You Know?

All YMCA job posting are available for viewing on our website: [www.ymcatoronto.org](http://www.ymcatoronto.org). A weekly e-mail is also circulated that lists the job postings. Ask your supervisor for more information on current job postings.

## 'Tis the Season...to Stay Healthy!

Cold and influenza are common at this time of year, but you can take action to prevent and treat them.

### Cold Prevention

- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly
- Keep your fingers away from your nose and your eyes

If your cold doesn't get better within a week, talk to your doctor.

### Influenza (Flu)

The flu is an infection of the respiratory system caused by an influenza virus (Type A, B or C). Symptoms include high temperature, cough, muscle ache, sore throat, chills and fatigue. Most people recover from

the flu within one or two weeks, but others, especially the elderly, may feel weak for a long time after other symptoms go away.

### Treatment

There are effective treatments that can reduce the duration of the flu or improve your quality of life. Consult your doctor within two days of the onset of symptoms to see if these treatments are right for you.

### Prevention

The best tool for preventing the flu is the flu vaccine. A flu vaccine is needed every year because new vaccines are developed annually to protect against new strains. Talk to your family doctor for more information.

## Milestones

We salute the following YMCA employees who celebrate anniversaries with our Association in December, 2006.

### 15 Years of Service

Olga Alvarez	Employment & Community
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Kai Li Shen	Health, Fitness & Recreation
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### 5 Years of Service

Rampatia Ganesh	Health, Fitness & Recreation
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Cathy Kocsis	Child, Youth & Family Development
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Yelena Mashintsova	Child, Youth & Family Development
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Sheila Jamileh Nahrvar	Employment & Community
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Varathan Pathmanathan	Association Services
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Jackie Zhou	Association Services
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*Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in this list, but if we've made any errors please contact the editor.*

## New Human Resources Plan Highlights Diversity

Our YMCA strives to be recognized by our staff as a top employer in Canada by creating a work culture that supports personal growth, job satisfaction and quality of work life. Our new Human Resources (HR) plan outlines how the Association will achieve this vision.

The HR plan addresses issues identified by employees in last year's survey. It calls on our YMCA to recognize our core strengths and build on them. It also highlights issues of social inclusion, calling for a review of systems and policies to ensure that YMCA staff reflects Toronto's diversity.

"Our new plan reinforces the importance of our staff and their skills as connectors," said Melanie Laflamme,

Vice President, Human Resources. "Our work environment requires increased knowledge and awareness of human relations. The result of this will be a more diverse and responsive organization, increased team work and collaboration and increased opportunities to connect people to each other."

The plan will review the Association's recruitment strategies and introduce new initiatives such as a reward and recognition program, a revised compensation system, a training and development plan, a career and succession plan and an alumni relations program. It reinforces the importance of good employee relations, trust and ongoing communica-

tion and the relationship between volunteers, alumni and staff.

"Employees are attracted to the YMCA because of our mission and values," said Laflamme. "We are fortunate to have a staff group who care deeply about the work they do. Our plan focuses on the ways our HR systems and processes can 'give back' to our employees. It is important that employees feel that their work is appreciated and that we have enabling systems that allow them to do their best work and contribute their talents." ▼

For more information about the HR plan, contact Melanie Laflamme, VP Human Resources at 416-513-1522 ex 181 or melanie.laflamme@ymca.net.

Contact Stefanie Di Risio at 416-413-1020 ext. 2115 with your story ideas.  
YMCA of Greater Toronto, 42 Charles Street East, Toronto, ON M4Y 1T4, Tel. 416-413-1020



Your YMCA's charitable registration number is 11930 7080 RR001

**Mission:** The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a charity offering opportunities for personal growth, community involvement and leadership.

**Vision:** The YMCA of Greater Toronto will focus on making connections: connecting people, connecting with youth, and connecting with the community.

**Values:** Caring • Health • Honesty • Inclusiveness • Respect • Responsibility



YMCA

We build strong kids,  
strong families, strong communities.