



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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YMCA of Niagara Reports Back to the Community, Looks Ahead to 2025–26, and Honours PEACE Medal Recipients at Annual Stronger Together Community Impact Celebration

GRIMSBY, ON — Today, community champions from across the region gathered at YMCA Niagara West for the annual **Stronger Together Community Impact Celebration**, a signature event that reflects on the past year's community impact, looks ahead to the year to come, and recognizes local leaders whose actions create meaningful change.

This year's event brought together donors, partners, municipal leaders, and program participants for a morning that wove together three key threads:

- Reporting back on the YMCA's 2024–25 community impact
- Sharing priorities and challenges shaping the 2025–26 Stronger Together Campaign year
- Presenting YMCA PEACE Medals to individuals and groups demonstrating the values of Participation, Empathy, Advocacy, Community, and Empowerment

Reflecting on a Year of Impact: One Million Moments Across Niagara

The YMCA shared a region-wide picture of its work across more than 125 sites and one million interactions with people of all ages across Niagara. These moments reflected the YMCA's role in providing connection, confidence, stability, and opportunities for people to participate fully — particularly where need is greatest.

Highlights included:

- Hundreds of thousands of touchpoints with children and youth, including more than 258,000 youth visits across health and fitness, day camps, and community programs
- Significant connection and support for older adults, with more than 243,000 moments of engagement, helping reduce isolation and strengthen belonging
- Thousands of newcomers receiving settlement, employment, and integration supports
- More than \$900,000 reinvested back into Niagara to ensure individuals and families could access YMCA programs and services

*"These are the moments — big and small — that shape stronger communities," said **Jonna Wolfenberg, Manager of Philanthropy**. "Every number represents someone feeling supported, welcomed, and included. And that is only possible because of the people, partners, and donors who stand with us."*

Looking Forward: Responding to Niagara's Most Pressing Challenges

The YMCA also shared its focus for the year ahead, grounded in the 2025–26 **Case for Support** — a mission-led response to the most urgent and compounding challenges facing Niagara: economic exclusion, health inequity, and social disconnection.

*"Need is rising faster than capacity," said **Christian Wulff, CEO of the YMCA of Niagara**. "Across Niagara, people are facing three compounding pressures — economic exclusion, health inequity, and social disconnection. Our Case for Support is the YMCA's response to these challenges, grounded in what we see every day across our communities. And while we will always act in accordance with our mission, our work is strengthened by the partners who stand alongside us. Our focus now is on scaling the conditions — the supports, partnerships, and access points that help people participate fully and feel like they belong."*

As the YMCA launches the 2025–26 Stronger Together Campaign year, the organization is inviting partners, donors, and community members to stay engaged in this shared work — work that addresses the root causes of exclusion and helps build a Niagara where everyone can feel healthy, connected, and supported.

Celebrating PEACE: Honouring Local Leaders Who Create Change

As part of **YMCA Peace Week**, the event featured the presentation of YMCA PEACE Medals by local mayors, councillors, and community representatives, recognizing individuals and groups that embody the YMCA values of Participation, Empathy, Advocacy, Community, and Empowerment.

"These recipients remind us that meaningful change often begins with one person choosing to act," said Wolfenberg. "Their efforts — often quiet, often humble — create moments that matter for others. We are grateful to celebrate them today."

A Shared Commitment to a Stronger Niagara

Today's celebration underscored a simple truth: when people feel supported, connected, and included, entire communities grow stronger. As the YMCA moves into the year ahead, it remains committed to responding to Niagara's evolving needs — and to working alongside local partners, donors, and community members to ensure that every person has access to the moments that help them feel valued and able to fulfill their potential.

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About the YMCA of Niagara

The YMCA of Niagara is a charity that ignites the potential in people, helping them grow, lead, and give back to their communities. We believe everyone has the innate potential to thrive and are dedicated to empowering individuals to tap into their full abilities. Through diverse programs and services, we foster connection, cultivate belonging, and support well-being to elevate the potential of every person and build a stronger, more connected Niagara Region. To learn more, visit www.ymcaofniagara.org

Photo and interview opportunities available upon request:

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