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The YMCA: So Much More  
By Brad Hughes, Association Volunteer Annual Campaign Director

I have been a member of a YMCA since I was eight years old. Throughout my childhood, you could find me at a YMCA swimming, playing basketball, camping, playing ping pong, or working out. Fast forward several years later, and you will still find me at the YMCA of Greenville. Five days a week, I arrive at 5 a.m. to connect with 25 or more of my buddies for a run or workout. Some days we kid and joke over a cup of coffee after our daily excursion; other days, we gather for prayer and ask God’s guidance in our lives as we face tough challenges with our families or careers. My Y is not just a gym…it’s a culture for me as it is for thousands of other families in our community. It’s relational, and it’s real!

Nearly 60,000 people engage daily with each other at a Greenville YMCA seeking opportunities to be healthier spiritually, mentally and physically, but often finding much more along the way. Each day, the Y drives positive change and outcomes that ultimately strengthen our community and the people who call it home.

The Y is a movement where members can be a positive social change agent shining the light on issues relating to the overall health of our community. For over 137 years, the Y has been driven by its Christian mission and values to help people grow through three areas of focus: Youth Development; Healthy Living and Social Responsibility.

Through Youth Development, the Y nurtures the potential of every child and teen. The Y gives youth and teens a safe place to belong while offering quality programming and services that ensure children are learning and developing into responsible and well-adjusted adults. The Y leads by example teaching Healthy Living initiatives to young people taking part in numerous after-school programs, day camps, overnight camps and through collaborations with partners like LiveWell, First Steps, and Momentum Bike Club. Teen Achievers, a mentoring program for teens, provides free college and career readiness training for more than 500 high school students in traditionally underserved communities. The state-wide Youth in Government program, headquartered in Greenville, offers 2,000 middle and high school students Model United Nations and Model Legislature experiences.

The Y is committed to helping everyone in Greenville County achieve a healthy lifestyle by providing the supportive and nurturing opportunities needed to grow stronger in spirit, mind and
body. Programs such as Wellness Works, a signature fitness program open to every Y member; BeastMode™, a high intensity interval training program led by CrossFit® certified instructors; plus a variety of group exercise classes and swim programs to keep our community healthy and well!

At the Y giving back and providing support to our neighbors is how we model Social Responsibility. This focus makes the Y different from any gym or fitness club. Initiatives like Togetherhood™ that unifies Y members in volunteer activities throughout the community makes the Y a special place to belong.

For a second year, I've had the privilege of being the volunteer leader of the Annual Campaign for the Y's Open Doors mission outreach to raise funds and awareness of the Y's mission. Through funds raised, we ensure that everyone with demonstrated need has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. In 2015, more than 8,000 Greenville families were touched with more than $1.2 million in sliding-scale scholarship funds. As we look ahead -the Y sees opportunities to reach, touch and impact more lives than ever in 2016!

Consider donating to the YMCA of Greenville to aid in closing gaps in our community and strengthen Greenville by helping individuals and families through programs and services that support youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. When you give to the YMCA of Greenville, you empower people of all ages to lead healthier lives and strengthen the bonds of community.

There are several ways you can help join me in the Y's mission outreach. Visit [ymca.org/give](http://ymca.org/give) to donate online; text Give to 41444 or call Jamie Inman at (864) 242-1111 ext. 21 to learn how you can support the Y's cause.

*Brad Hughes*

Brad Hughes is Agency Principal for the Brad Hughes Allstate Insurance Agency and is serving his second year as volunteer Campaign Chair of the 2016 YMCA of Greenville Open Doors Annual Campaign. Additionally, he also serves on the Metro Greenville YMCA Board of Directors, Board of Directors for Loaves & Fishes, and CCES Booster Club as Past Chairman. Brad is
married to wife Traci, and together have two children, a son Bradley and a daughter Allison. They are all active volunteers in the community.