

Why Ask Y? Grove City YMCA quadruples services in just a decade, now serving 8,000

By Brad Isles

When the Grove City YMCA opened the doors of its new building on East Main Street in 1999, some 800 members were able to enjoy its indoor swimming pool, fitness center, gymnasium and a general selection of programs.

In just over a decade since, the YMCA has become the single largest provider of wellness, recreational and social services in the Mercer County area, as its membership and program offerings have essentially quadrupled. The Y currently serves more than 3,900 members and 8,000 individuals in and around Grove City through an array of programs specifically tailored to a diverse and sometimes vulnerable population – ranging from children to low-income families to teens to senior citizens.

“We’re much more than just a ‘gym and swim,’” said Dorry Foster, chief executive officer of the YMCA of Franklin and Grove City since 2006.

In order to meet the ever-growing needs of its constituents the YMCA kicked off an aggressive capital campaign in 2010. Its goal is to raise more than \$4.3 million for a new addition that will house a program arena, a warm water pool and locker room, a teen center, an elevated walking track and more. The 30,000-square-foot expansion will double the size of the current facility.

More than half of the YMCA’s members are children and youth so it’s no surprise that teen clubs, sports leagues, family nights, community service projects and prevention programs are among the Y’s most popular. Foster said that the YMCA’s close proximity to Hillview



Photos courtesy of the Grove City YMCA

Children and youth make up more than half of the 3,900 members at the Grove City YMCA, and 150 kids are served each day in after-school programs.

Intermediate Center presents a unique scenario. The Y currently receives roughly 150 children right after school, and only stands to welcome more upon completion of the new Grove City Middle School in September 2011.

“The number of kids coming through our doors after school is phenomenal,” Foster said. “It shows that parents trust us, and kids love our staff and programs.”

It’s not just the younger generations that benefit from the YMCA. Foster noted that programs such as SilverSneakers and water aerobics classes are standards for seniors. A new diabetes program, cancer support programs like “LIVESTRONG” and “Healing with Grace,” and a program for people living with Parkinson’s or similar mobility disorders called “Moving Beyond Ability” are in the works. The Y is also paying close attention to obesity and nutrition issues for young and old alike.

The YMCA’s promotion of



healthy lifestyles is just one impact it has on the community. Others include its service to constituents of all incomes, ages and abilities, its ability to mobilize resources to meet community needs and its aforementioned service to vulnerable populations. And those are what make the Y one of the leading non-profit organizations in Grove City.