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# ACCORD

March 2010

## Advocacy and Appreciation in Albany

YMCA staff and volunteers gather in the State Capitol to advocate for priority issues



Above: Senator David J. Valesky with constituents YMCA of Greater Syracuse CEO Hal Welsh and YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley Hank Leo.



Left: YMCAs of New York State, Inc. Chair and Plattsburgh YMCA CEO Kevin Killeen

Over 120 YMCA staff members and volunteers from all over the Empire State gathered in Albany on February 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> for the 2010 YMCAs of New York State Advocacy Days. Attendees at the annual Key Advocate's Dinner were entertained and educated through various presentations. These included appreciation to a man who has spent a lifetime volunteering on various YMCA boards, followed by a lawmaker who has helped the YMCAs in his district to succeed through his unwavering support. Finally, attendees were entertained by a political commentator who lent a little humor to the ever growing dark cloud that looms over the State Capitol in Albany.

Arthur McComb received an appreciation award for his service to the New York State YMCA Foundation, a part of the New York State YMCA Alliance. Few volunteers dedicate as many years and as much effort to a cause as Mr. McComb has given to the YMCA. NYS Senate Vice President Pro Temp David Valesky was also recognized for his dedication to the community and for his efforts to improve the YMCAs across the State. The YMCA of Greater Syracuse CEO Hal Welsh and YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley CEO Hank Leo shared personal accounts of the Senator's commitment to the YMCA and his constituents.

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### A Note from the Director



**Kyle Stewart**

Uncertainty at the State Capitol is quickly becoming the norm. As our Governor is mired in a scandal that threatens his political career (perhaps even before I click send on this newsletter), the State Budget deficit grew by yet another \$1 billion. Our total State Budget deficit is now a staggering \$9

billion. The scandal's chaos has put budget negotiations at a standstill. However, State leaders need to complete a State Budget at some point, which is why events such as our Advocacy Days are so important, to ensure that our voice is heard! Thanks to all that attended and please keep up your efforts!



Helping The YMCA Help Others

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The guest speaker portion of the program was wrapped up by Susan Arbetter, of Central New York's Public Broadcasting and current host of the radio program: Capitol Pressroom. Ms. Arbetter shared a humorous account of the absurdity that often defines political life in Albany.

YMCAs of New York State Chair Kevin Killeen presided over the dinner program and led the Annual Meeting portion of the event, specifically highlighting the organization's newly updated Strategic Plan.

YMCAs of New York State Executive Director Kyle Stewart delivered the YMCA State Priority Issues briefing and gave an overview of the political and fiscal environment as it impacts the YMCA and our advocacy agenda. The next

morning, the Empire State Plaza was bustling with activity as YMCA staff and volunteers gathered to network and strategize at breakfast. YMCA participants were seen "working the halls" throughout the Legislative Office Building and State Capitol as they made their way to and from their lawmakers' offices, effectively showing the YMCA's presence in Albany. After the groups met with their legislators, many returned to debrief and share stories from their meetings with YMCAs of NYS staff and Board members.

Thank you to everyone that attended and participated in this important event! Your time and participation is an integral part of our work to advocate on behalf of the YMCA. Please remember that advocacy is about relationship building and we look forward to hearing about your continued successes as you visit with your elected officials in their district offices.



Left:  
Attendees are briefed on the organization's Priority Issues in anticipation of Advocacy day meetings with their legislators.



Right:  
Attendees from the YMCA of Greater Syracuse



YMCAs of New York State Chair Kevin Killeen thanks Art McComb for his years of service to the YMCA.



Left: YMCA of Greater Rochester CEO and YMCAs of New York State Board Member George Romell asks NYS Senator David Valesky a question regarding the Advantage After School program.

## **ACTION ALERT: SAVE AFTER SCHOOL!**

Governor Paterson's Executive Budget proposal contains plans to cut the Advantage After School Program to \$17 million from current \$28 million this year. Such a substantial cut would force 79 of the 303 program sites to close when their contracts expire this year. **It will mean the elimination of access to programs for more than 10,000 children. Additionally, up to 3,000 jobs may be lost.**

The YMCAs of New York State, Inc. will provide each YMCA CEO with a template letter to send to their State Legislators requesting that this drastic cut be stopped. **Please send this letter and/or call your state officials to inform them of the devastating effects this 40% cut would have on our children and communities.**

**Contact your legislators:** <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/> and <http://www.nysenate.gov/senators>