



YMCA of
Southwestern
Ontario



Y IMPACT

A twice-yearly update on how you're helping communities shine

Just like our Y-branch friends Jessi and Colin (at right), we're sending a hand heart your way. Thank you so much for igniting the potential in people at the YMCA. **We're grateful that you're our donor!**

Read on to learn more about the impact of your generosity at the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario.

And to our friends in Chatham, Sarnia and St. Thomas, **we'd like to introduce Art Stirling** as the Y's new Development Officer, serving our donors in these communities! You can reach Art at 519-360-9622 x 1155 or art.stirling@swo.ymca.ca, or stop by the Chatham-Kent YMCA to say hello.

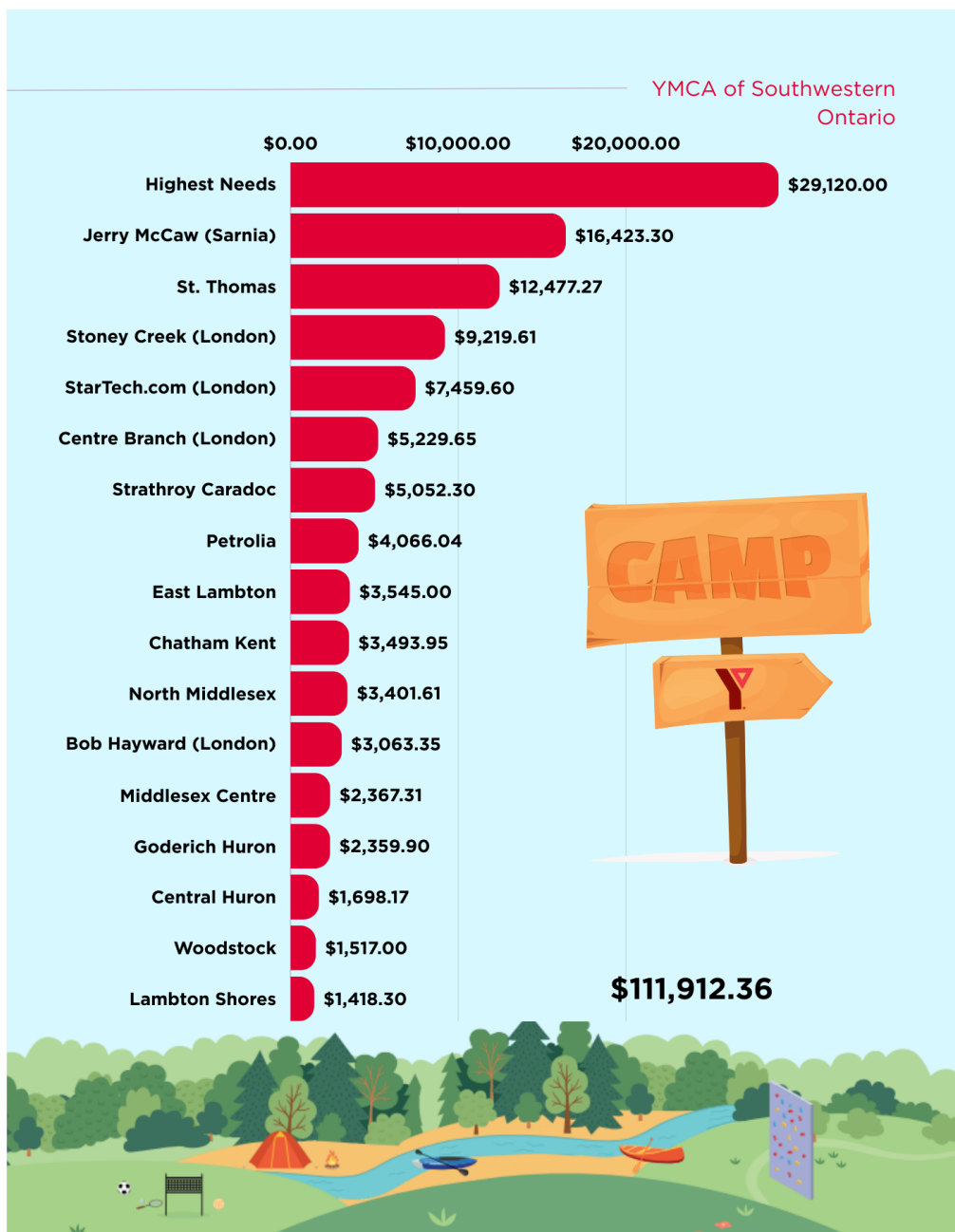


Spring 2024

Your Impact – 2023 Fill the Bus CAMPaign

Did you know that children across Southwestern Ontario, in communities big and small, need financial assistance in order to attend YMCA summer camp? This is why we run our Fill the Bus CAMPaign each summer – so that kids who are living with financial hardship can experience the fun and adventure of the Y in the summertime.

Thanks to you and your fellow donors, **746 weeks of subsidized YMCA Summer Day Camp were provided to kids in Southwestern Ontario in Summer 2023.** Here's a snapshot, by community, of the \$111,000+ raised!



Melissa's Story – Stoney Creek YMCA

My journey at the YMCA is a testament to the incredible power of resilience and determination, proving that you can retrain your brain and overcome even the most challenging obstacles. I lost 80 pounds and got into excellent shape, a transformation that was once considered impossible due to a daunting childhood diagnosis.



For Melissa (second from left), Group Fight has provided both improved physical fitness and empowerment

As a child, I was diagnosed with Craniosynostosis with Intracranial Pressure. Following a high-risk surgery with a mere 50% chance of survival, my neurologist delivered a disheartening prognosis: my balance and coordination would only deteriorate with age, painting a bleak future. When I first started school, I couldn't even hold on to a pencil, and physical activities seemed out of reach.

The doctor's words left me feeling defeated. I had almost given up on the hope of a better future when **I discovered the YMCA and its life-changing programs**. The support and encouragement I received there boosted my confidence, proving that anything is possible when you put your mind to it.

Among the many incredible programs offered at the YMCA, the group fitness programs became my haven. Group Fight quickly became my favourite, providing both improved physical fitness and empowerment. I also found joy in Group Power, Group Blast and Group Active, each contributing to my journey toward optimal health.

One of my most cherished memories at the YMCA is taking karate. This martial art not only refined my physical abilities, but also taught me valuable life lessons about discipline, self-control and perseverance.

Being movement-healthy is now an integral part of my life. I'm no longer confined by the predictions of my neurologist. Instead, I'm breaking barriers – because I'm raising my grandchildren, and I refuse to let my past dictate our future. I need to be fit so that I can take care of them, run around with them, and be a strong presence in their lives.

More importantly, I want to be an example for them – to show them that you can do anything you put your mind to.

The YMCA has been my partner in this incredible journey of transformation. **It's a place where dreams are rekindled, and limitations are shattered.** My story at the YMCA is a testament to the power of belief, resilience and boundless potential.

Remembering Mary and Don Hislop

Here at the Y, **we're very grateful to the family of Don and Mary Hislop**, who donated a sizable gift to provide financial assistance for memberships, camps and programming at the Sarnia-Lambton YMCA Jerry McCaw Family Centre.

Today, we're pleased to share a little bit about this wonderful couple – former Y members who dedicated their lives to their family and community.

Family was the top priority for Mary and Don, who moved to Sarnia in 1950. Both were enthusiastic participants (and sometimes coaches) in their kids' and grandkids' lives.

Although the family travelled all over North America for music, hockey and baseball, the couple's heart was always with their Sarnia community, where they volunteered and participated with many organizations.

As longtime Y members who used the fitness facilities at the Jerry McCaw Family Centre until they were well into their 80s, both Don and Mary believed in the benefits of fitness and physical activity. They loved the outdoors and were instrumental in establishing a minor baseball/softball organization in Blackwell, which included building a diamond from scratch on a former sugar-beet-loading property.

For years they advocated and lobbied for a plan to convert the former CNR track into a walking trail from central Sarnia to the Clearwater (now Sarnia) boundary with Plympton Township. The result of their efforts is the well-loved Howard Watson Trail.

Don and Mary were community builders. They felt strongly about helping kids in the community whose families could not afford things like swimming lessons and summer camps. And they were passionate about helping the Jerry McCaw Family Centre and its financial assistance program. **Thanks to their family's generous gift, their work lives on to this day.**



Mary and Don Hislop

Connect with us!



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