

# GENERAL INFORMATION

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## Historic Highlights of the Branches of the YMCA of Greater Hartford

**Camp Chase** was opened by the New Britain Y in 1963 as Camp Holiday Ridge and purchased in 1985 by the YMCA of Greater Hartford. Extensive improvements including full renovation of the pool were made in 1987-88. In 1991, the name of the outdoor facility was changed to Camp Chase YMCA to honor the generosity of the Chase Family. Each Summer the Camp Chase facility hosts a YMCA Day Camp and a Family Swim Center.

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**Camp Jewell** was founded in 1901 with the first camp site at Tunxis Island in Long Island Sound. Thanks to the support from Col. Charles A. Jewell (for whom the camp is named) and other YMCA supporters, the camp moved in 1902 to the shores of Lake Swanzey, New Hampshire. In 1953, Greater Hartford YMCA, General Secretary Francis E. Gray raised a then-record \$565,000 for the purchase and construction of Camp Jewell and the YMCA Outdoor Center on 500 acres of land overlooking Triangle Lake in Colebrook CT. The camp celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2001 with the opening of Centennial Lodge.

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**Camp Woodstock** was built in 1922 on a 125-acre site overlooking Black Pond in Woodstock Valley, by the leaders of the Hartford County YMCA. The camp was run by the legendary general secretary of the County Y, Elmer "Pop" Theines. The Camp received heavy damage, but was rebuilt following the hurricane of 1938. The rebuilding of the camp, despite significant financial obstacles, was urged by Pop who believed such a place was needed to counter the darkness covering Europe at the time. Several new buildings were constructed following both the 1987 and 1999 Capital Campaigns.

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**Downtown Hartford** saw its first structure built in 1892. It included the first indoor swimming pool in Hartford. Other structures were built in 1938, which housed locker rooms and a swimming pool, and 1974, the "Fit Zone," a residence floor, and offices.

The Industrial Management Club was established in 1939 and gave mid level and line managers of the many manufacturing firms in Hartford a place for continuing education and socialization.

In 1977 the branch established its first emergency shelter, Jewell House, for teenagers.

Recognizing that the YMCA was not doing enough to provide programs and services to families in Hartford's other neighborhoods we began expanding beyond our walls. We started the Minority Achievers Program in 2003. Downtown YMCA Urban Initiatives program offers activities for kids and families at the Learning Corridor in Hartford's SouthEend. These were first steps in building opportunities for Hartford's residents.

In May 2006, the YMCA on Jewell Street closed its doors and the new Downtown YMCA, located at 241 Trumbull Street, opened. The new Downtown YMCA was designed for working adults offering classes from indoor cycling and power walking to yoga and Read to Succeed, an adult literacy program. The Jewell Street building was sold in order to divest resources to the local neighborhoods with new family centers. We expect to open the first building in north Hartford in late 2008.

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Responsibility.

That's the Y.



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**East Hartford** programs began on a sporadic basis as far back as 1926. Consistent year-round programs have been run since 1941. The current building on Main Street was built in a joint Capital Campaign with the YWCA and dedicated on October 26, 1958. In 2001, the East Hartford YMCA bought the main street building and began the process of planning and fundraising for the current Teen Center that was dedicated in September 2007. Though the building on Main Street has been through a number of changes, programs in the community including Child Care, Day Camp, and Swim Team have been a common thread through the years. The branch today partners with many other East Hartford agencies to provide programs for teens and families.

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**Farmington Valley** traces its origins back to 1918 when it was part of the County YMCA. It provided a multitude of programs not available, especially to young people, by the then poor rural town governments. It was a classic “YMCA without walls” providing opportunities in borrowed or rented facilities. The YMCA of Greater Hartford purchased the former Swim Center One in Granby in January, 2001, and built a new state of the art 70,000 square foot facility with 2 pools, a gymnasium, a climbing wall, group fitness studio, Family Activity center, 2 babysitting rooms, a community room and much more! Farmington Valley YMCA continues to serve 14,000 members throughout Farmington Valley.

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**Glastonbury Family** Branch traces its roots to the early 1960’s. Its emphasis has always been to serve youth and families. For many years, it provided statewide leadership to the YMCA Youth and Government Program. It has a highly successful gymnastics team involving children from pre-school through high school.

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**The Indian Valley** Branch had its first presence in the region back in 1869. The Young People’s Christian Association charged one dollar yearly for dues and had a purpose of “promoting the social, intellectual and spiritual welfare of our village.” Not much has changed in the ensuing 132 years. Indian Valley traces its modern roots back to the organization of the Tolland County YMCA in October, 1925 in Rockville. The Indian Valley Branch YMCA today is recognized as one of the premier human service agencies in its region. It is the largest provider of child care in its towns and provides a wide range of youth, family and adult programs based out of its home at 375 Hartford Turnpike in Vernon.

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**Tri-Town** Branch was formed in 1949 as the South Regional YMCA. Programs began thanks to a grant from the Community Chest, now known as the United Way of the Capital Area. As a non-facility location, the branch has always found collaborative partners. An example is the current relationship with the Hartford Marriott in Rocky Hill where the branch provides swim lessons to area children in the hotel’s pool. The name was changed in 1999 to reflect its increased role in all three of its service communities; Wethersfield, Newington and Rocky Hill.

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**West Hartford** has some records of programs dating back to 1900. Hi-Y clubs were the first formal program in 1935. The first branch office was built in 1944 thanks to a donation from Miss Edith Howard. It housed a snack bar, dance floor, games and club rooms at 72 South Main Street. The current building opened in February of 1958 following a joint campaign with the YWCA.

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**Wheeler Regional** Branch's seeds were planted in Plainville in 1912. The Y became part of the County YMCA when that entity was formalized in 1918. By the 1960's the YMCA was providing valuable services to an increasing number of people with a new emphasis on opportunities for adults and families. The current building was built thanks to the generosity of Frank and Bertha Wheeler. It was dedicated and opened in January, 1964. In 1977, it became the first branch in the Association to offer before and after school child care programs. The main building and an adjacent child care center were expanded and renovated thanks to a Metropolitan Capital Campaign in 1987. In 2004 the Wheeler Regional Family YMCA underwent another major renovation and expansion. Today the Y services the towns of Avon, Bristol, Burlington, Farmington, Plainville and Plymouth.

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**Wilson-Gray YMCA Youth and Family Center** opened its' doors on September 28, 2009. This family neighborhood destination serves as a town green style community center for all of Hartford's neighborhoods. The Wilson-Gray YMCA Youth and Family Center will be the centerpiece for collaboration between three organizations; the City of Hartford, Community Health Services and the Urban League of Greater Hartford, to provide services to these communities where nearly half of all children live in poverty and have the city's highest concentration of poor families. Through these collaborations we can help families and young children in particular reach their god given potential in Spirit, Mind and Body.

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