

WHAT THE Y IS: A Message from the Wood River Community YMCA

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KETCHUM, Idaho - Back in 1989, the City of Ketchum leaders had the vision to recognize the emerging needs of an extraordinary community. Ketchum was growing into a community of unique individuals from around the world, who had chosen this nurturing, small town environment for their families in which to live and flourish. These City leaders were anticipating expanding need to provide further recreational programs, as well as to help facilitate cultural, arts and educational programs, and also to support additional community services.

Driven by this vision, the city acquired a 5.74 acre parcel of land that would be used for multiple purposes to provide year-round recreation, to enhance cultural arts and to support community services available to everyone. It was with this initiative that the citizens of Ketchum approved a ten-year bond to purchase the Park and Ride parcel to help secure this future potential for all.

Soon a group of dedicated volunteers emerged whose project and vision met the multi-purpose objectives of the City. For approximately ten years this group of volunteers has worked in the community to raise awareness and invite participation on many levels. Over this period, hundreds of people in Ketchum and the Wood River Valley have supported this initiative with their dreams, their time and their funding. The City of Ketchum has also continued to support the project through the on-going development.

When the YMCA – the largest not-for-profit community service organization in America reviewed the Janss Center vision and business plan, they felt the project was truly a YMCA, without the YMCA name. By mutual agreement the project became the Wood River Community YMCA.

When this was announced, even more volunteers came forward to help. They were typically residents whose lives had been impacted by experiences they had while growing-up with the support of their local Y. The Ketchum City Council also recognized the enhanced potential of the project with the addition of the YMCA organization, and they agreed to establish a partnership with the new Y to take the long-standing vision to reality.

One of the critical issues is the funding required to develop the project. To date the Y has been very successful in attracting donations ranging from ten dollars to over one million dollars, by compassionate residents who recognize the tremendous value the project would bring our community.

In an effort to secure the capital funding required, the City and the Y Board had also discussed the potential of a merger of the Ketchum Parks and Recreation Program with the YMCA. Within days of this discussion, it was agreed by all parties that this was not the best interest of the community. This was publicly announced at a city meeting on May 17th, 2004. Instead, the YMCA and the Parks and Recreation department have started meeting to discuss how they can complement one another's programs.

The Wood River Y has continued its independent fund-raising. To date the Y has already raised \$5.5 million dollars, towards a total requirement of \$16 million for the entire project (for both hard and soft costs). Altogether, this puts the project squarely within feasibility range and the Wood River Y Board is doubling its fund-raising efforts to meet the requirements to proceed.

With the recent reorganization of the expanding volunteer group into the YMCA direction, the stepped-up fund-raising initiatives, the changes to the architectural plans based on community input, the program committee meetings, plus the recruitment and hiring of a full-time YMCA executive to manage the process - the Y Board has been working extremely hard and are anxious to communicate the project development with the entire community. The lack of ongoing clear communications about the recent developments has caused several misunderstandings in the community that need to be properly addressed very quickly.

Over the next few days, weeks and months ahead, the Wood River Community Y will be working hard to share the plans that have been developed through the hard work of over seventy local residents acting as design committee volunteers, plus numerous experts and our local community leaders. Existing community programs and needs assessment have also been reviewed and addressed.

We will invite comments, suggestions and discussion through an open process in which everyone who is interested can participate in the development process. The goal is nothing less than to be the best the Y can be for our community. As always, the volunteer board who is guiding the development looks forward to further input to ensure the best possible return of services, while further enhancing this extraordinary environment we all chose to live in.

The Y is open to everyone - for people of all faiths, races, abilities, ages and incomes. No one is turned away for inability to pay.

The Y is strength - through the people they bring together.

The Y is highly experienced - with a YMCA in over 2,500 communities in America and expanding into more than 120 countries.

The Y is responsive - every Y makes its own decisions on what programs to offer in each community and how to operate.

The Y is nurturing - it fosters personal growth, personal expression, helps develop strong character and inter-personal skills.

The Y is compassionate - helping to provide special community services, or possibly a home base for local organizations to meet.

The Y is mobile - the 'Y-on-Wheels' program takes some of the YMCA's unique resources out into the communities to interact and enrich social development in local neighborhoods.

The Y is wet - with an excellent swim program for all ages, all year long.

The Y is frozen solid - with an excellent ice skating facility that will handle the needs of local professionals, to recreational hockey and figure skating of all ages and developmental levels.

The Y is challenging - with a rock-climbing wall that will help develop strong minds and bodies.

The Y is active - with exercise and fitness facilities available to everyone, all-year.

The Y is fun – with activities for the entire family to spend quality time together.

The Y is entertaining - with a flexible indoor concert venue and exposition center.

The Y is a nurturing - with a spirit of community openness, fairness and acceptance for all who wish to participate.

The Y welcomes all ages - offering special programs for teens and seniors.

The Y is visionary – like you.

The Y is yours, mine and ours.

Wood River Community YMCA was granted YMCA status in 2003 and is currently in fundraising and planning for a center that will serve all of Wood River Valley. For more information on contributing to the capital campaign, please contact Mike Wolter, Campaign Director, at 208-726-6260 or mike@woodriverymca.org. The YMCA, over 150 years old, is collectively the largest non-profit community service

organization in the United States. Additional information on the YMCA organization can be found at www.ymca.net.