

The Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges Celebrates 125 Years of Community Service

This year marks a milestone for the Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges: 125 years of community service. "All of us at the Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges are excited to be celebrating this occasion," said Richard K. Gorab, President and Chief Executive Officer. "I'm particularly proud to be serving the YMCA at this time in our long and distinguished history."

The year long celebration will culminate with a special Anniversary Gala on October 21st at the Pleasantdale Chateau, West Orange, NJ.



The Metro YMCAs of the Oranges' first home was a small house on Main Street in Orange, the building would go on to be renovated by Thomas A. Edison, who was one of the YMCA's first members.

Some highlights of 125 years of service

The YMCA of Orange was founded on October 15, 1885 by industrialist Samuel Colgate, revivalist Dwight L. Moody and YMCA professional Sumner F. Dudley, who convened a group of church leaders to charter a YMCA "for civic and cultural improvements to the Oranges." The YMCA's first home was a small house on Main Street in Orange, in 1924 the building was renovated and Thomas A. Edison, one of the YMCA's earliest members and supporters gave the building its electric lights, making it one of the first buildings in the world to have modern electric lights.

Membership grew dramatically, to more than 3,000 in 1924. That year construction was completed on an addition to the main building in Orange.

In July 1890, the YMCA of Orange opened its Oakwood Branch, which later became the East Orange Branch of the Metro YMCA. The East Orange YMCA Turrell Community Center opened in 1971, thanks to the generosity of the Turrell Fund, to become the East Orange Branch. In 1978 the Branch was designated by the National Council of YMCAs as the nation's most outstanding example of a YMCA operated by minorities for underprivileged youth. It offered activities for after-school, nursery school, swimming, "Slimnastics", day camp, cultural enrichment programs as well as provided a meeting place for community activities. It also served to emphasize the history and culture of African Americans in its various activities.

The Livingston Branch was founded in rented quarters in 1954. The Branch was so successful that plans were made for permanent quarters. A new facility was dedicated in 1969 in Livingston on land donated by Alan Sagner and generous donations from Donald R. Baldwin, his family and others in the community. The Livingston Branch became the West Essex YMCA.

In 1976 property was purchased for the South Mountain YMCA. An old construction garage was converted to a gymnasium dedicated in 1981, with a house for an office. The first full-time childcare center at the South Mountain Branch opened in 1981. June, 1999, the South Mountain YMCA formally dedicated a new 18,000 square foot Child Care and Program Center in Maplewood.

The organization changed its name to the Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges, or less formally, the Metro YMCAs of the Oranges in 1993. The new name signifies solidarity of purpose and programming for its five distinct Branches.

The largest YMCA association in New Jersey

Today, the Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges is the largest YMCA association in the state of New Jersey, serving over 163,000 members and program participants annually. Its Mission: "To enrich the lives of the children, families and communities we serve, through programs that build spirit, mind and body, welcoming all people, in an environment nurturing positive values."

Through its five branches, located in East Orange, Hardyston, Livingston, Maplewood and Stillwater, the Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges provide a wide variety of quality programs for infants and children, teens, adults, families and seniors: health & wellness, childcare, before & after school enrichment, summer camp, sports, aquatics, leadership, youth development, conference groups and environmental education.

Throughout its 125-year history, the Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges has evolved as society has evolved while remaining true to its core values, providing important services to its members and its communities.