



BRIDGES

PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP OF YMCA RETIREES

The Chalice Letter

Like a Candle Flickering in a Frosted Window

The beauty and pageantry of Christmas is most appreciated on a global scale and among families of our homeland wherever you are, who celebrate all the traditions of The Christmas Story. My YMCA career began in Ethiopia and concluded, at least on regular salary, 42 years later in Jerusalem. The orthodoxy at both bookends of a remarkable journey brought to life the four weeks of Advent and concluded with the Twelve Days of Christmas.



The 12 days of Christmas is the period that in Christian theology marks the span between the birth of Christ and the coming of the Magi — the three wise men. It begins on December 25 (Christmas) and runs through January 6 (the Epiphany, sometimes also called Three Kings' Day). Additionally, the four weeks preceding Christmas are collectively known as Advent, which begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on December 24.

Happenstance upon visiting our favorite hardware store inspired recall of an old family tradition during Christmas. In an open box lying on the floor in the back corner of the store were candle decorations. I remember my grandmother, who emigrated from England to Canada, always placed a lit candle in the frosted window during Advent. It added a nice warm touch to our home decoration. Then my wife, MaLes, shared a story from Irish history.

During periods of religious persecution in Ireland, a lit candle in the window was meant to be a welcome sign for priests traveling through to come in from the cold. When asked by English authorities, the observant Irish would answer the candle is a welcome for the The Holy Family, Joseph and Mary.

Religious tradition aside, for many, a candle lit from the fireplace and placed in the front window is a sign of hospitality and the warmth of home to share with others.

As a young child, I lived with my family in Tsingtao, China on the coast of the Yellow Sea. Among the happiest memories were recreation activities for families on the beach organized by the YMCA. When I eventually returned back to the USA at four years of age, I remember feeling strange to be among so many white people all in the same place. Culture shock happens not in the going but when you return. I recall the feeling of relief when I saw the traditional Y logo at the entrance to the local YMCA. I

did not feel like a stranger anymore. The lit candle in the window has taken on new meaning.

Some of you operated YMCAs with large single resident dormitory style hotels that required 24/7 oversight. I had operations responsibility with three YMCAs that included a residence during my career. I remember that residence staff were on special alert during the holidays to provide extra care and festive hospitality for residents who had nowhere else to go during Christmas.

During my watch as Executive of the Hollywood YMCA in California, two of my staff just got off their late evening hotel desk shift and decided to walk up to Hollywood Boulevard to join celebrations of Christmas Eve. When they reached the outside corner of the Y, they heard an unusual rustling noise from above. They turned, looked up and saw an elder woman fashionably dressed climbing over the edge of the fire escape of the top floor. While one of the staff ran back to the entrance to race upstairs from inside, the other staff person began talking to her as she stayed in place ready to jump. Thankfully, they managed to coach her inside. They talked and listened to her once they confirmed she had checked into the hotel the night before.

Local police in Colorado confirmed her story. She was a grandmother forcibly removed from her own home by family. She became a homeless elder runaway and came to Hollywood. She was always impeccably dressed and hardly the typical resident of a YMCA. Our residence director went to work and found a halfway house for homeless elder women in nearby West Los Angeles. Months later, she came back to the Y with some of her new friends from the halfway house. They were all stately appearing well-dressed elder women. They knew her story. They all wanted to come and visit the Y. Each had a story they felt comfortable to share with us. I would like to think when they think of the YMCA, they now see the "lit candle in the window".

Sometimes Christmas is a time to renew traditions to recall historical meaning and find new meaning in our current lives. When simple happenstance returns meaning to Christmas and prospects for a Happy New Year, then perhaps it was not happenstance, but just meant to be. Like a candle flickering in a frosted window, it may be very cold outside, but if it is the Y, it is warm and welcoming on the inside.

Have a healthy and prosperous New Year 2018.

Norris Lineweaver

WFYR Chair



BRIDGES



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- (If we missed your group or erred, please let us know.)

The message from our Chairman offers promise for the coming year and reflects the values and aspirations gleaned from our own YMCA careers. Norris brings insights from his experiences as a World Service worker. Both the Wilsons and Lineweavers have spent time in Jerusalem and felt the power of a YMCA working for reconciliation and inclusion. Let us pray that the small candles glowing in many YMCAs around the world can burn more brightly in the coming year.

Members of YMCA Alumni (formerly AYR) have been asked to participate in a detailed survey aimed at revealing ways to enhance their experiences at the local level and regional levels. The survey seeks reactions to the national goal of helping members “Connect, Travel, and Serve”.

Your editors had an opportunity to combine all three areas in a recent holiday trip to Hawaii. We connected with our good friends, **Don and Sue Anderson**. Don, as you know is a Past Chair of WYFR and an active organizer of YMCA activities in Southeast Asia. He does a great deal of traveling to connect with Y colleagues. He and Len were able to be together for a phone conference focusing on ways to support WFYR’s goals for its Global Retirement Initiative, aimed at helping YMCAs establish retirement initiatives for promising staff. Don has provided an excellent report for readers of *Bridges*.



Service responses by WFYR groups target somber reminders of growing hunger in areas around the world, lingering effects of nuclear disasters, the crushing impact of loneliness among the elderly, and the impact on all our countries as they attempt to embrace the flow of refugees.

This edition of *Bridges* highlights messages of cheer and best wishes from our WFYR friends and affords opportunities to look behind the “candle in their windows” to share the fellowship and support they bring to colleagues and communities around the world.

Len and Joyce Wilson

Please send photos or articles to Len Wilson:
1101 Washington Avenue, #307
Philadelphia, PA 19147, or
len.wilson@comcast.net



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Feliz Ano Nuevo by Eileen Murray

The 'Latin Network' of YMCA retired alumni met again in South Florida, on Dec. 12, 2017. Primarily a holiday get together, at this meeting the group enjoyed a sumptuous meal at the local Cheesecake Factory; and shared fond memories of their YMCA life and times.

First formed at the 2014 YMCA World Council Mtg in Estes



Members of the Latin Network; Left to Right: Heli and Gladys Rojas, Mary Rivera (Columbia); Omaira and Herman Romero (Venezuela); Rosita Piraquive (visitor from YMCA of Bogata); Eileen Murray (USA); Oneida Padilla de Mendez, Hector Mendez (Cuba); Martha Prado (Argentina), Jerry Prado Shaw (Boliva)

Park, CO, the group convened formally April 2106 in Montevideo, Uruguay; together with retired YMCA colleagues from across Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

A number of YMCA Latin Network alumni have retired to the USA, to be closer to family and loved ones. Thanks to retired Y/USA International Division Latin America expert **Jerry Prado Shaw** -- and with the support and endorsement of the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (WFYR) and its Chairman Norris Lineweaver -- a special chapter was authorized by YMCA Alumni USA on U.S. soil. The 'Latin Network' affiliates with LACA FYR.

The importance of supporting U.S. and World YMCA programs providing financial assistance for retired colleagues was discussed; as were ideas for non-monetary support and outreach to retired colleagues who find themselves isolated, not connected online or to other easy means of communication.

Renewed friendships, and important bonds, are forged once every four years by hosting a WFYR World Conference in conjunction with the World Council.

To this end, WFYR Chair **Norris Lineweaver** is raising travel subsidy funds for retired delegates from Africa, Latin America, and South Asia to attend. 54 colleagues are pre-registered as of late Dec. 2017; and \$47,000 has been raised toward achieving a \$60,000 goal by March 30, 2018 in order to secure 'early bird' registration. Individual gifts from retired colleagues have ranged from \$250 to \$3,000.

CHIANG MAI... Promotion and registration

Preregistration Progress Report

Target goal chart

Previous attendance at:

No	Target goal for Chiang Mai	No. delegates	%	Current	Pending	Estes Park	Hong Kong	
1	Africa	8 to 10	12%	6	2	7	5	o
2	Asia	14 to 16	22%	10	4	8	13	o
3	Europe	10 to 12	15%	10	0	8	2	o
4	Latin America & Caribbean	10 to 12	15%	15	0	13	4	o
5	Middle East	3 to 5	5%	4	0	2	1	o
6	North America: Canada + USA	20	31%	9	11	22	10	o
	Total	65 to 75	100%	54 = 83 %	11	60	35	o

We still have 11 spots available. Sign in as soon as possible. Contact the Registrar:
Jerrypradoshow@hotmail.com



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

CanafYR by *Franco Savoia, President*

As we start 2018, we are 113 strong under our new name the Canadian YMCA Alumni. We are busily developing a new logo and letterhead to reflect the change. However the change is more fundamental. We feel that is more inclusive. Long serving YMCA volunteers and staff who served the YMCA for considerable length of time but then left to work in other non -YMCA settings now feel more welcome and are encouraged to join under the “alumni” name.

As our Executive meets each month there is warm feeling of having worked together over many years in a variety of roles and now are again working together in new roles but the experiences shared over time surfaces in our conference calls. Whether a camping experience, the opening of a new YMCA centre or youth work—there is a certain glow in the soft reminiscing.

One of our major challenges are the great geographic distances. It is difficult to stay in touch when face-to-face meetings become almost an impossibility. In areas such as southern Ontario with greater density there are more YMCA Alumni in geographic proximity facilitating regular get-togethers. However in places like the maritime provinces in the east coast or the four western provinces, getting together is an impossibility.

We are pursuing and considering smaller geographic groupings of our membership around larger cities across our nation. This will hopefully facilitate Canadian YMCA Alumni in getting together for face-to-face lunch or other activities.

Distance doesn't make the heart grow fonder. It take effort to spend time together. And together we can identify new and bolder ideas how we can continue to provide support to our local YMCA, to our national movement and with time internationally as well. The only limiting factor will be our imagination and energy.

In so doing we are convinced that as we help and assist, we are contributing to our own health and wellbeing.

To all of our colleagues around the world, we extend best wishes for a happy and successful 2018.

Tielines

The Winter 2017 Edition of *Tielines* brings thoughts of the Christmas Season surround us. While many of us celebrate Christmas, we are well aware that many celebrate other religious or spiritual holidays at this or close to this time. In our northern hemisphere daylight becomes scarce but also begins to become more plentiful as we move through the cycle bringing with it hope for brighter days ahead. In the meantime we gather and share in the light and warmth we have at hand to support one another. Warm greetings to all and wishes for a Happy New Year. Peace.

New Research from the YMCA of Greater Toronto
“As you know, the past year has been a tumultuous one — globally, and especially in the United States, but also here in Canada, where we’ve seen a spike in hate crimes and extreme political rhetoric.”

Our research tells us that our newcomer youth programs really help young people through the settlement process. After participating: • 93% of participants say they’ve made a new friend • 77% say they’ve made new friends outside their own ethnic group • 94% feel strongly connected to their new communities.

Jerusalem International YMCA



Parents and children gather to share holiday blessings in the YMCA lobby.

Wishing all our friends
in WFYR
a **Happy New Year** from the
Jerusalem International YMCA

Thanks to your committed support throughout 2017 we have reached great heights and achieved big goals, including having doubled the number of those impacted by the JIY in previous years.

Thank you



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Germany by Albrecht Kaul



I wish you and your family Merry Christmas. May His love fill your heart and home this Christmas season and in the coming year.
Yours, Albecht and Family

Japan

Christmas 2017 Highlights of the year



Trip to Vancouver with Shin in January
Plum flour garden on the way to Ako Hot



Kobe Port 150th Anniversary



Autumn at the Chishakuin Temple, Kyoto



Spring with Hikari & Hitomi



Kenta's Birthday



We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Christmas 2017 Yuyo and Yukio Yamasaki

Documentary Film Produced on Fukushima Nuclear Disaster

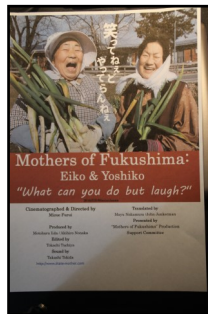
Would you like to see this film and know the real life of regular people after the disaster?

The Nuclear Disaster happened in Fukushima Japan in March 2011. Many people had to be evacuated from their communities and still they live in evacuation Centers in Fukushima.

This 95-minutes film shares the reality of lives of Fukushima today by showing two women's lives and their ways of handling the stresses and hardship.

Mr. Hoshino, chairperson of JFYR, and some other YMCA related members support the village people in the evacuation center.. Anyone interested in seeing it with others, may rent it. Please visit the web site below.

<http://www.iitate-mother.com>



Y's Retired of the UK by Jim Lamb

Members and friends of the Y's Retired of the UK, (a member of the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (WFYR) have one thing in common - RETIREMENT!

The majority of us have or are coming to terms with the demands of retirement. Some cope extremely well whilst others experience problems which can be all consuming.

I have become aware of how little I have understood about the effects of 'real loneliness' experienced with all ages but in particular the 50plus with emphasis on retirees. A casual stroll through the local country park led to my encounter with a respected professional man whose demeanour was such to cause me to utter a quiet 'good morning' resulting in his sharing in depth his personal condition.

Never had I encountered such a deep loneliness becoming despair and tendency to suicide. I have since taken a serious look into loneliness not fully appreciating the various training courses on counselling and suicide with the YMCA in the past!

Colleagues, friends and strangers irrespective of social or educational background are vulnerable in times of need. Are we sensitive to offering the hand of friendship or above all to be a 'good listener' when the need arises as no doubt many of you do by post, telephone, email and through the spoken word?

The Y's Retired of the UK letterhead 'strap line' simply states, "Keeping Retired YMCA staff (and Lay Workers) in contact with each other".

Keep as well as you are able and in good spirits, may Christmas be a time of blessing and New Year a time of peace to the whole world.

Jim

I Am the New Year

I am the new year. I am an unspoiled page in your book of time.

I am your next chance at the art of living.

I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned about life during the last twelve months.

All that you sought and didn't find is hidden in me, waiting for you to search it out with more determination.

All the good that you tried for and didn't achieve is mine to grant when you have fewer conflicting desires.

All that you dreamed but didn't dare to do, all that you hoped but did not will, all the faith that you claimed but did not have -- these slumber lightly, waiting to be awakened by the touch of a strong purpose.

I am your opportunity to renew your allegiance to Him who said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Anon.



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Global Retirement Initiative (GRI)

by Don Anderson, Committee Chairman

The Candle Continues to Flicker and Now There is Some Light at the End of the Tunnel

Since the 1970's concerned YMCA leaders have tried to formulate a practical response to the plight of staff colleagues in developing countries who lack financial security after retirement. In many countries, where heroic YMCA leaders have devoted their life to uplifting the condition of others, there is no or inadequate retirement income provided by the YMCA or government. As a result many former YMCA staff suffer in poverty and experience a lack of dignity. Yes, we have the World Alliance Secours Speciaux Fund to assist when an acute financial crisis develops but the reality is that we need to do more to proven those financial crises from ever occurring.

While there has been much effort put into achieving progress on the issue, we have had no tangible results up until now. There are reasons for the lack of progress. it is not an easy problem to deal with. Complicating factors include the lack of stable monetary systems, governance and financial structures in developing countries; overriding priorities at the World and Area Alliances; lack of finical resources; laws regulating the custody and movement of funds for retirees located in other countries: technical matters of administration and investment, etc.

Over the last dozen years a Global Retirement Initiative (GRI) has evolved within WFYR. Initially WYFR leadership (**Don Anderson, Jerry Prado Shaw, and Bonnie Mairs**) met with

the World Alliance General Secretary (**Bart Shaha**) and formulated some ambitious plans. Eventually we all came to realize the issue dwarfed the ability, structures and resolve of the movement. WFYR leadership then set some tangible goals that were more limited in scope. We would seek to put in place some successful individual retirement schemes that could serve as models, be replicated and serve as inspiration for future efforts. At the 2014 WFYR meeting at the World Council in Estes Park we set a goal of having three completed models in place by the WFYR gathering at the 2018 World Council.

While it is doubtful that we will have three models in place, it appears we will have two. These two will result from the leadership and thoughtful planning of **Jerry Prado Shaw** and the Latin American and Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs (LACA) plus funding from the World Brotherhood Fund of the USA retiree organization which recently changed its name to YMCA Alumni. One of the models has already been funded and put in place and a second is being planned at this time. We are deeply grateful to WFYR Chairman Norris Lineweaver, Past WFYR Chairman **Jerry Prado Shaw**, leaders of LACA, leaders of the USA YMCA Alumni and contributors to the World Brotherhood Fund for bringing forth the first fruit in an effort that spans decades.

The Models have been shared with the African and Asian Alliances and hopefully we will one day be able to report successes in those areas.

Don

Bangladesh Fellowship of YMCA Retirees



Bangladesh Fellowship of YMCA Retirees

Founded on 11th March 2016, Friday at 5:30 p.m.
in front of Bangladesh Parliament House
(South Plaza), Dhaka, Bangladesh
+88-01912024841 & +88-01730328841
Email: bfyrs2016@gmail.com



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

YMCA Alumni (USA)

Words to Members from YMCA Alumni President Dale Packer

“Never to be idle, it is wonderful how much will be done if we are always doing.” — Thomas Jefferson

I identify with those words. I retired in 2006 after 45 years as a YMCA professional and my wife **Joy** jokingly said she has been the CEO of our home for many years and did not need or want a COO.



That told me I needed to keep busy out of the house and I did. I became Vice President of the *Chambers* AYR Chapter, then president. That led to becoming Vice President/Central of AYR and now to president of YMCA Alumni.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your president for the next three years. These should be exciting times as we proceed with our innovative Marketing Plan and with the strong board we are assembling.

Our board will be serving your chapter throughout my tenure with information that will help with the increasing emphasis on membership recruitment, renewal, and retention.

I am available to you, so feel free to contact me at any time. If you have a problem, let me know, but bring me a possible solution as well.

We wish you and your family a healthy and happy new year.

Dale Packer, YMCA Alumni President

Christmas Luncheon for World Service

Central Atlantic YMCA Alumni Christmas Auction and gift auction raises \$2000 to support YMCA World Service recovery projects in Puerto Rico.



Dominican YMCA Service Project

Friends, A sincere "thank you" goes out to you for making it possible for the Dominican ACJ (YMCA) and our friend **Andres Fortunato** to provide all the fixings for a Christmas Eve feast for the humble folks who live in the YMCA Village in Don Gregorio, Dominican CRepublic.



Andres reports that 260 boxes of food and cooking supplies were distributed by the YMCA Volunteer Leaders and staff, and an additional 279 cooked meals were provided just to the children at a party at the ACJ (YMCA) building.

I have included some pictures of this year's distribution and dinners. As always, Andres invites you to come and help with the party and distribution next year. Let me know if you are interested; it is sure to make your holidays bright!

Again, many thanks! **Lou Falk**



Willis Chapter Enjoys Florida Christmas Pageant

Right: A group of Willis Chapter members enjoy the Fort Lauderdale Christmas Pageant, a 30-year holiday tradition in the Sunshine State. (Photo by Jane Glanz)



CHIANG MAI...2018

*World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees
Sixth World Conference*



BRIDGES

February 2018



C/O Ken White
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USA



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All who would like to receive BRIDGES will be able to, without a "subscription" fee. However many retirees from countries all around the world have sent a USD subscription remittance to support WFYR. Any who wish to make such a contribution may use this remittance form. Check should be made payable to WFYR.

TO: WFYR Communications Chair: Ken White, 46 Squirrel Road, Doylestown, PA 18901, USA. "I wish to provide support for WFYR at USD \$7 per year _____, or \$18 per three years _____. Extra contribution to WFYR \$ _____ I want to RECEIVE each issue of BRIDGES, but I am not able to help financially at this time. _____

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