



June 2019

# BRIDGES

PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP OF YMCA RETIREES



## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

My wife Debbie and I were celebrating Easter weekend during a Sunday church service, listening to prayer for wisdom, will, courage, perseverance and strength. Prayers cause us to use our imagination to follow the words of Ephesians 3:20-21, "And God imagines a world where all are safe, all are loved, and all are fed." Then, news broke about the horrific events in Sri Lanka. I immediately thought of **Theonis (Charles) Brownson**, the



National General Secretary of Sri Lanka and the safety of his 38 YMCAs, his staff, volunteers, members, and indeed, the various communities they serve. I thought of our member **Evan Page** who recently agreed to serve as Vice Chair – USA, and who had spent years cultivating partnerships with the Negombo YMCA in that country. Evan is the retired CEO of the Worcester, Massachusetts

YMCA. He is helping us as a member of the Global Retirement Initiative ("GRI") Coaching Team to introduce a YMCA retirement/pension program in Sri Lanka. As I did, he reached out to his friends in Sri Lanka to check on their safety. He talked about knowing the priest of one of the churches that were bombed and attending services there. Elsewhere in this issue you will learn more about Evan's work and WFYR's hopes for a strong connection to the Sri Lanka YMCA movement. But, back to how we can use our imagination in the way it was intended. We can envision – and work for – a world:

Where YMCA brothers and sisters of the YMCA of Venezuela, suffering from the tragic and unprecedented situation in their country, were helped by their fellow colleagues around the region by providing a Christmas bonus for all 404 workers of the different YMCAs units. The WFYR Regional Executive Committee, under the leadership of **Roberto Uria Mendez**, took this action to show solidarity and love.

Where YMCAs around the world, with the help of local Y retirees and under the renewed leadership of the World Alliance Secretary General, **Carlos Sanvee**, can ensure no child goes unfed, unhoused, or unloved and where no one ever fears abuse or violence.

Where each time a YMCA retiree travels to a foreign land they can reach out to a **YMCA Ambassador** to serve as a contact for their travels under a program led by **Len Wilson**, and recently adopted by the WFYR Leadership Team, which is also reported on in this edition of *Bridges*.

Where, in the face of Global Warming (no it is not a hoax) people from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi no longer fear

Cyclones or the people of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin no longer face rising flood waters. Where 5000 youth and adults can gather together in London, to celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> founding of the YMCA movement and our continued work to eradicate racism and hatred, to serve the needs of youth and bring peace to a divided world.

Where asylum seekers on both sides of the southern border of the United States (and refugees everywhere) find people who welcome, protect and support them.

Where widows and children and regular folks like you and me get help from **Secours Speciaux** to provide financial support to ease the burden of a sudden illness or the lack of any secured retirement because WFYR achieved its goal of doubling the amount of money raised in support of this important charity, under the leadership of **Bonnie Mairs**, its chairperson.

Where the Uighur and Rohingya peoples are no longer persecuted for their Muslim faith.

And, where YMCA retirees around the world can live in dignity because of the perseverance and patience of people like **Don Anderson**, **Jerry Prado Shaw** and others from the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees ("WFYR") who continue to lead the movement in creating a **Global Retirement Initiative** to ensure financial security for those who dedicated their lives to serving their community.

Imagine!



Imagine.....that the world no longer has to see images, like that above, where people of all faiths gather for the mass funerals of almost 300 people who were killed, or visit hospitals where 500 people who were injured, are recovering from the senseless, violent acts like those which occurred in Sri Lanka on Easter weekend. The prayers of the entire YMCA movement go out to the families of those who suffered, and to the entire country, in hopes that there will come a time when we truly can say – Never Again.

*Phil Dwyer*  
**WFYR Chair**



# BRIDGES



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

## THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITORS

Notre Dame and Sri Lanka, two terrible tragic events within a week of worldwide observances of Easter have spurred prayers, protests and promises for swift positive responses. But, can that happen as political stalemates continue while the environment withers under constant global warming and the infernos of hatred stoked by radicals and self-serving leaders threaten every family and community?

God continues to bless the YMCA, and, in many ways, it has become as symbolic as Notre Dame, not because it is a church or a religion, but because it is a faith based, strong force for reconciliation and community action. The YMCA and its leaders continue to provide effective service without the political snares of government institutions or the bottom-line motivation of the for-profit sector and we retirees must never forget and never stop trying to help our local YMCAs stay that course.

Chairman **Phil Dwyer** and WFYR leadership have accepted the challenge of expanding WFYR fellowship into additional countries. Ironically Sri Lanka was to be our first goal and the addition of **Evan Page** as our Vice Chair underscores that resolve. Hopefully we can reach out to our colleagues in Sri Lanka with some form of assistance as well as our prayers.

**Bridges** will continue to highlight the dedication and devotion of **John R. Mott** to involving the YMCA wherever its presence and support was needed. Your editors recently attended a memorial service and exhibit recalling the atrocities inflicted upon the Armenians a century ago, but highlighted and honored the work of two workers, **James Arroll** and **John Elder**, inspired and directed by Mott to provide the work and support of the YMCA during that horrific event.

Gender equality still needs to spread around the world and YMCAs need to set examples. The Jerusalem International YMCA has announced that its selection of a new Chief Executive sends that message. Colleagues are asked to send words of support and encouragement to **Rana Fahoun**, as she takes on the huge challenges facing that YMCA to expand services to its community while remaining a symbol, much like Notre Dame, and the JIY tower of hope, to YMCAs around the world.

Don't miss the article on **YMCA Ambassadors**. Consider volunteering to proudly acquaint YMCA retirees visiting a part of your country for the first time.

We encourage you to continue contributing articles of WFYR and local YMCA activities, so we continue to maintain, inform and support our worldwide fellowship.

*Len and Joyce Wilson*

**Please send photos or articles to Len Wilson:**

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**[len.wilson@comcast.net](mailto:len.wilson@comcast.net)**



## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### Introducing Evan Page *New WYFR Vice President from USA*

It is with enthusiasm that I look forward to involvement with the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees. Reconnecting with many friends of the past and getting to know all of the other retirees who are contributing to WFYR will be a great pleasure. Now that I am fully retired, I will have time to devote energy to the important mission of WFYR.

In my YMCA career, international programming always took a high priority. During my 30 years as a CEO, my YMCAs had partnerships with Argentina, Poland, England, Germany, Japan, Scotland, Africa, Ireland and Sri Lanka. My wife, **Marti**, and I attended international meetings in Scotland and Prague and participated in a YUSA leadership program, visiting YMCAs in the Holy Land. YUSA also asked me to represent the US on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the China YMCA. All of these relationships and experiences have been life-changing.

In our family life, we adopted our children from Korea and Vietnam. Because our household was an international one, we wanted to have an international focus in our home. Consequently, over the years we have had young YMCA women and men from 27 countries stay with us anywhere from an overnight, to a week, a month, 6 months or a year. Needless to say we have an extended global YMCA family who have enhanced and enriched our lives.

One of the most meaningful connections happened when the Worcester Y began a partnership with the YMCA in Negombo, Sri Lanka. I took my first trip there in 1993 during the height of the 30-year civil war. My hosts took me on a tour of the thirty-five local Ys, all struggling to survive amidst the conflicts facing the country. Negombo was an area where many women with children had come for safety, but, by necessity, were living in small shacks by the lagoon. The local Y had been assisting them but needed additional resources. There was no Y facility; they were actually operating out of a board member's back yard. They needed a building.

Through fundraising effort (I engaged 10 other US YMCAs, as well as personal friends), they had their first building. They continued to grow and so needed yet a larger facility. Now after

20 years, they have a well-functioning YMCA. Over the years I have been able to raise approximately \$350,000 to assist these building projects.

The recent bombings in Sri Lanka have been devastating to their country, especially in Negombo where 159 people were killed while hundreds more were injured and traumatized. They will need our continued support and prayers.

For these reasons and more, I was pleased when **Phil Dwyer** asked me if I would be involved with the Global Retirement Initiative (GRI) pilot program. Helping the local YMCAs in Asia establish a retirement system is a very worthwhile project. I look forward to this work and being more involved with WFYR.

Working with all of you to enhance the mission and work of this important organization will be, as I said, my pleasure.

### A Win/Win Opportunity *US Y Retirees Available to Assist Y's in Other Countries — Bonnie Mairs*

Dear friends,

Please help spread the news about a program of the YMCA Alumni that enables US Y retirees to assist YMCAs in other countries on a volunteer basis. Do you know a YMCA that would like help in such areas as YMCA administration, English as a Second Language, program development, training or volunteering in special events? If you do, tell them about the International Service Corps (ISC).

This program assists host YMCAs while providing opportunities for talented US Y retirees to share their skills. ISC is actively recruiting YMCAs around the world interested in hosting a US Y volunteer for a period of 1-6 months.

The ISC program is flexible and aims to achieve meaningful service opportunities for US retirees while assisting the host YMCA with specific needs. Recent placements have included teaching English and swimming in the Dominican Republic and giving basketball clinics in Russia. Generally, the US Y Alumni organization will cover the cost of international travel, visa and immunizations; the host Y provides housing, local transportation, some meals and, in some cases, a small stipend. The US volunteer will typically pay for food, personal effects, and health insurance. Details are worked out on a case by case basis.

If you know a YMCA that might be interested in discussing this idea or in hosting one of our talented, experienced volunteers, please contact the ISC Chairman, **Bob Lomauro**, for an application form or further information. His email address is [leobob50@hotmail.com](mailto:leobob50@hotmail.com)



Evan and Marti Page with friends in Sri Lanka



## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### John R. Mott and American Relief in the first Republic of Armenia 1918-1920



John R Mott

**James Arroll** and **John Elder** were inspired and directed by **John R. Mott** to enable the American YMCA to provide operational assistance to the Caucasian relief measures. These two young men directed relief measures that saved thousands of lives when local AID workers had been compelled to withdraw.

“They had not anticipated being stranded as the only Americans left in the country with all communications to the outside world cutoff when the frontline faltered. World War I was still raging at the time and allied forces were in retreat at the front,” said **Dr.**

**Rouban Adalian**, Director of the Armenian National Institute at his lecture presented April 24, 2019.

Three representatives (shown below) from the YMCA were present at the memorial service and lecture at St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church in Wynnewood, PA. On behalf of the YMCA they accepted the appreciation of the Armenian community for the heroic work of these two YMCA relief workers on the 100th anniversary of the what Armenians call “The Genocide.”

Arroll and Elder focused on relief efforts as they established



James O. Arroll, 1918

bases for thousands of starving refugees and orphaned children as the heart-wrenching humanitarian disaster continued during the war. The report included published excerpts from Elder’s published journal as well as his photographs (many shown on screen at the event). Elder captured in photos the tragedy of such sights as emaciated children, and parents



scratching for scraps along the railroad tracks. **Dr. Adalian** cited evidence that those two dedicated and determined YMCA workers probably accounted for the survival of thousands of orphans destined to grow up forever remembering the communal suffering and ultimately being the grandparents of most Armenians living in this century.

In early 1919 Elder continued to count on YMCA friends and **Dr. Mott** to keep funding channels open. “We have opened another orphanage at Novo Bayazid with definite instructions to our man to accept no more than 150 orphans. Elder wires back he has taken in 300 and has no food for them.” But somehow against all odds, most of the orphans under the care of the YMCA survived. The narrative is horrifying and heroic. The YMCA can be proud of the inspiration and support **Dr. Mott** provided to workers like Arroll and Elder in hundreds of troubled areas around the world. **Bridges** invites readers to learn more about this YMCA rescue effort directed by **John R. Mott**.

Website Reference: [www.armenian-genocide.org/files/americanrelief.pdf](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/files/americanrelief.pdf)



Greater Philadelphia YMCA Executive Director Dave Mullin, Greater Philadelphia YMCA Director of Information Technology Jean Scutt, Armenian National Institute (ANI) Director Dr. Rouben Adalian, and retired Jerusalem YMCA General Director and *Bridges* editor, Leonard Wilson



The program ended with the sharing of delicious Armenian food.



*Bridges* editors Len and Joyce Wilson with host Steven Keytanjian



## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### Canada YMCA Alumni 2019 Spring Update by Franco Savoia

**Alumni survey:** Our new 11-member Executive has begun its two-year term. Its first action was a survey of its 136 members. We were pleased with the 82% response to the survey. The Executive has begun to review the results. One of the key values of the Alumni is communication. They appreciate the bi-monthly newsletter. They appreciate updates on alumni and on local, national and international YMCA work. Most prefer communication via e-mail.

**Secours Speciaux:** The Canadian YMCA Alumni is not a registered charity and thus we are unable to issue charitable receipts. This has had an impact on the level of giving to *Secours Speciaux*. We remain very committed to the program and are looking at solutions.

**Co-sponsored YMCA Alumni Hubs:** Given the geographic distances between many of the Canadian YMCA Alumni, face-to-face meetings continue to be a challenge. We have developed a co-sponsored Alumni hub program in the larger centres across the country. The concept is to work in partnership with the local YMCA CEO to invite Alumni and prospective Alumni members to periodic get-togethers. With this approach we hope that the local Y can help identify and invite retired staff, past board members and past staff to these gatherings. Three are currently underway: Toronto, Sudbury and Calgary. Four others are under development.

**Awards:** Each year the Canadian YMCA Alumni identifies and recognizes one Alumni member for their contribution to their YMCA in their retirement. **Ursula Hoehner**, a retired staff of the YMCA of Greater Toronto and a long time Y Alumni will be recognized in Toronto at a YMCA meeting for her contribution in supporting the Y and the Alumni. We also recognize one YMCA for their support of the Alumni. The 2019 recipient is the YMCA of Northern Alberta who provides graphic support to **Colin Hatcher**, our bi-monthly newsletter editor, in publishing it.

### Y's Retired of the UK By Jim Lamb, President

**Jim Lamb** combines his Annual Report for 2018 with the May edition of their newsletter. He is delighted to welcome **Andrew Jenkins** (first Welshman to join the Executive Committee) as the new Treasurer, and thanks **Ray Allen** for over ten years of diligent service in that post. He also announces that **John Naylor** will succeed **David Smith** as representative to the

**Secours Speciaux** Committee.

Retirees of the UK have established a Trust Fund and subscriptions to augment annual donations to *Secours Speciaux* for this very fine charity of the WFYR.

Colleagues in the UK are looking forward to another great outing in July when the Cambridge Reunion takes place. "The invitation is open to all members within striking distance or further afield if by car, rail or *Shanks Pony* to Cambridge – a delightful city for a day out." *Bridges* will be looking for photos and stories.



A large group of Y's retirees enjoyed the 2019 week at Trelohan Manor St. Ives, Cornwall. A film, quiz and mystery tours added to fun, and the good food enjoyed with friends was followed by nightly prayers and communion before departures.

### BFYF

By Sudip Arinda, Chairperson

Greetings from Bangladesh Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (BFYR)

Members with their family of Bangladesh Fellowship of YMCA Retirees attended the



Annual Retreat and Picnic – 2019 of Bangladesh Baptist Church, Dhaka, in March. Total participants were 155. Everyone enjoyed the day and had fun as numerous games were organized for all ages of people. There was a small biblical session led by Pastor of Bangladesh Baptist Church and opportunity for sightseeing. **Mr. Sudip Arinda, Mr. James Sujit Sarkar, Mr. Staya Ranjan Halder, Mr. Tapan Karmakar and Mr. Alex Frank Raulim** with their family joined the program.



## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### Venezuela YMCA

by Jerry Prado Shaw

Dear friends, once again I would like to extend our sincere thanks for your support and solidarity with the initiative to help our devoted friends from YMCA Venezuela last Christmas; the response and the results have been extraordinary. I also take great pleasure in providing the report produced by the Latin Americana and the Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs. I am confident that it could count on your satisfaction.

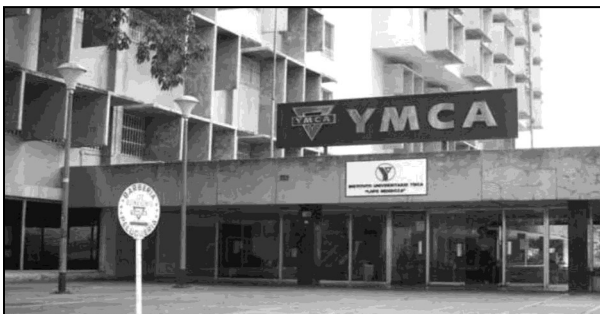
Affectionately, **Jerry Prado Shaw**.

Dear friends, the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela is an unprecedented milestone in the region. During the last 24 hours, we saw thousands of people moving to Cúcuta, Colombia, to support the arrival of humanitarian aid to Venezuela. This activity increases the tension between Nicolás Maduro and opposition groups, creating border closures and violent clashes with victims. The Venezuelan people suffered from a growing hunger, insecurity and poverty; forcing millions to abandon their homes to find refuge in friendly countries, making it one of the largest migratory movements in the region's history.

Faced with these facts, the YMCA Venezuela keeps its doors open to provide opportunity and hope to hundreds of families with the sole objective of building more just and equitable communities.

We also recognize the personal efforts many of you make through your churches or social networks to help Venezuela. All the actions that we can do add to express our solidarity, appreciation and affection for our Venezuelan sisters and brothers inside and outside of Venezuela. Today we will share with you the campaign report of YMCA Venezuela accountability for the international movement actions taken, but also to reiterate our desire to see Venezuela again thriving on such an important day for this nation.

The attached report is also available at: <https://www.lacaymca.org/public/ymca-con-venezuela/> - I thank you for your attention and your solidarity with Venezuela. Regards, **Antônio Merino**, General Secretary - [antonio.merino@lacaymca.org](mailto:antonio.merino@lacaymca.org)



### Y Alumni USA

by President G. Dale Packer

Dear Friends in WFYR, We had some great reports during our March YMCA Alumni Board meeting that I would like to share. We currently have 901 membership units with 120 Lifetime members. We are recognizing members over 90 years of age with a lifetime membership. All new retirees are given a free membership the first year and we have had a 35% retention rate for those memberships. That is great news!

Our Corporate Y Sponsors helped us design and print marketing materials, officer training for our 48-Hours meeting, our newsletter **Connections**, our website, and so much more. We thank them. Our electronic newsletter has won a second annual award from Constant Contact. It is awarded to just 10% of the millions of companies and organizations worldwide who use social media/email service. Our "open rate" is 65% , while most organizations are thrilled with 25%.

The World Brotherhood Fund, which was inactive for years, is now working to help those in other countries to establish retirement funds for colleagues who do not have a government or private retirement fund. This is a great service of the YMCA Alumni and one we are very proud of. Currently there are two Y retirees in Latin America receiving help in establishing a retirement fund, and WFYR is working with other possibilities which we all hope will be finalized this year.

We encourage WFYR members to sign up for our September Reunion 2019 in Louisville. Details and registration information are available on our website: [ymcaalumni.org](http://ymcaalumni.org)

### Secours Speciaux (SS)

Put WFYR's priority support of Y retirees on your annual giving list. Contact **Bonnie Mairs** if you know of a retiree who needs assistance from SS. Bonnie Mairs [Bonnie1673@earthlink.net](mailto:Bonnie1673@earthlink.net)





## WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

### JFYR to Meet during APAY General Assembly

*by Kohei Yamada*

Japan Fellowship of YMCA Retirees, JFYR has been meeting once a year in fall. This year we will have Asia & Pacific Alliance of YMCAs, APAY General Assembly in Japan. The Assembly will meet at the Tozanso, near Mt. Fuji from September 2 to 6, Monday to Friday this year. The JFYR encourages the retirees to attend the Assembly even partly and therefore the JFYR annual meeting will be held on September 6 and 7, right after the Assembly at the same venue, Tozanso. Some members may come a little earlier to meet oversea guests or just have lunch together



on September 6, the final day of the Assembly.

If you are interested in attending the General Assembly or/ and also attending JFYR meeting, you are welcome to join us at the Tozanso. You can see the super view of Mt. Fuji from the YMCA chapel of Tozanso as you see the back of chapel in this picture. You have to register for the Assembly. If you are interested you are invited to the JFYR one day gathering for free.

Special fees arranged for the Retirees' participation; For those who come on Sept 4 to attend the APAY General Assembly, we will arrange a separate accommodation (hotel) near Tozanso and lunch and dinner on 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, 120 USD plus hotel charge for two nights (about 150 USD). And for those who attend the JFYR meeting on Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> at Tozanso for free (JFYR will cover for those guests). So you may arrange your trip to Japan on 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> to enjoy our fellowship and travel to Japan.

Please let me know if you are interested.

Contact address: Kohei Yamada, JFYR member at [kyamada246@gmail.com](mailto:kyamada246@gmail.com)

### Consider Becoming a YMCA Ambassador

At last year's WFYR gathering in Chiang Mai, it was unanimously accepted to adopt a worldwide fellowship program that reflected the fellowship and hospitality of WFYR members. The program was introduced as **YMCA AMBASSADORS**. All those present indicated they would be willing to be available in their country.

The program aims to recruit Y retirees around the world that will be available for a short meeting with other Y retirees visiting for the first time in their part of the world. Bridges has already reported on an initial visit by an American couple visiting London that met Jim Lamb and received a very personalized tour of some YMCAs as well as special sites in the area.

Jim, like many Y retirees, went to special efforts for his WFYR friends, but the program only calls for a short meeting, perhaps a lunch, and some valuable tips on what to see and best ways to travel.

At a recent Executive meeting of WFYR, it was decided that WFYR would establish a booth at the YMCA Alumni reunion scheduled in Louisville, KY this coming September. Y retirees would be recruited to host travelers in their part of the states. Several retirees in the US have already indicated a willingness to serve as Ambassadors.

If readers of Bridges are interested in signing on, you will have first opportunity to represent WFYR in your part of the world. Please indicate your decision on the special line provided on the last page of this issue and return to Ken White. You may also indicate your decision by sending an Email directly to Ken at [wfyrmembership@gmail.com](mailto:wfyrmembership@gmail.com).

Bridges will continue to keep you informed as the program grows and we look forward to providing accounts and photos of WFYR hospitality worldwide.

### Memories from Chiang Mai 2018

#### Prescott Johnson

Always "up front" for WFYR. Thanks for all you do!





**BRIDGES**

June 2019

C/O Ken White  
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Printing and distribution support for BRIDGES is provided by the YMCA of Greater Philadelphia sending a message of "Brotherly Love" to YMCA retirees around the world.



**BRIDGES IS FOR ALL WHO WISH TO RECEIVE IT**

*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: YMCA Alumni*

I would be willing to become a YMCA Ambassador.\*

**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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