

YMCA のコミュニティ支援

～アメリカ・ミネソタ州における移民の異文化理解促進事業～

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Learn more about the YMCA of the North and the Partnership with Osaka YMCA

Kerry Givens (YMCA of the North Vice President of Operations)

The year 2020 has been a year of changes, small and large, for all of us. Here in Minnesota, the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities is now known as the YMCA of the North, a name change which is more inclusive of all the communities we serve.

"The name YMCA of the North stretches beyond the limits of geography and captures an ideal state — a true north," said Glen Gunderson, president and CEO of our Y. "Our mission continues to grow through people, programs and places served — and now more than ever, our community response efforts are working to serve our neighbors when they need us most."

Our community response efforts can be seen across the Y, including in the work of our Equity Innovation Center and Social Responsibility team. Throughout Minnesota's fight against COVID-19, YMCA Family Support Specialist Ali Alghafilee continues to help individuals and families connect with the resources they need. Ali works with the YMCA New American Welcome Centers (NAWC), which support immigrants through integration services, community partnerships and strategies to build cross-cultural understanding. Recently, Ali was visiting with a Syrian refugee family who fled the civil war in their country just a few months ago. The young woman in the family had reached out to Ali for support as she was the sole caretaker for her elderly parents. Not only was Ali able to connect the family with economic, telecommunication, transportation and food shelf resources, he also helped the daughter obtain health insurance through the state of Minnesota's special enrollment process.

"Unfortunately, she didn't have an admitted refugee status like her parents, so she had to seek asylum to be able to stay and look after her elderly parents who are suffering from health issues and financial hardship," said Ali. "She had expressed a concern about her health as she doesn't have health insurance and she's been told she can't have health insurance assistance due to her immigration status in the country." Since she was the only person in her household able to go out and get essential needs and medications for her parents, she was worried about what would happen if she got sick, knowing she wouldn't be able to afford health care out of own pocket. Ali promised he would do his best to help her.

After calling some low-cost clinics, Ali learned that she would have some options, but they would likely still be out of reach cost-wise. Undeterred, Ali continued doing research and reached out to YMCA partners at the Department of Human Services. Ultimately, after learning more about the

eligibility requirements for COVID-19 Emergency Special Enrollment, Ali was able to walk her through the online process and she became officially insured.

The family was so overjoyed that they sent a thank you message to Ali wishing that he stays safe, happy and always in good health. As for Ali, as he helped new Americans integrate into Minnesota, he could relate to the need for cross-cultural understanding, as he himself was an immigrant to the U.S. from Iraq. Ali gained his U.S. citizenship this summer, a historic day for him and his family! The work of Ali and the New American Welcome Center is always a reminder to the Equity Innovation Center team to continue serving our communities with the opportunities we are given.

Although COVID-19 may prevent in-person connections between the YMCA of the North and the Osaka YMCA for the near future, this long-lasting partnership will most certainly endure and find innovative ways to collaborate. The partnership between the two can be traced back to 1889, when the Minneapolis YMCA sponsored John Swift as a World Service Worker in Japan (the YMCA World Service Movement supported the first workers sent overseas). From student exchanges starting in 1963 and continuing into this last decade, to Mr. Ogawa, Osaka YMCA CEO, and Mr. Tajiri, Director of the YMCA Global Department, visiting the Y in Minnesota in 2018, to Glen Gunderson, Michael Lovett (Board Member) and Kerry Givens (Vice President of Operations) visiting the Osaka YMCA in 2019, the YMCA of the North deeply cherishes its partnership with the Osaka YMCA and looks forward to exploring new ways to learn, share, and exchange ideas.

Looking ahead to the future, the Equity Innovation Center of Excellence at the YMCA of the North will continue to serve the Twin Cities community and beyond. After the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May 2020, all eyes were on the Twin Cities as our nation and the world entered a renewed struggle for racial justice. Recognizing the need to address the larger societal issues at the root of George Floyd's death, UnitedHealth Group donated \$5 million to the YMCA Equity Innovation Center of Excellence in memory of Mr. Floyd.

“We all have a lot of work ahead of us to address long-standing inequities, and it's going to take individuals, governments and private enterprises like UnitedHealth Group to achieve our goals of a more inclusive society,” said Glen Gunderson, president and chief executive officer of YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities. “We're grateful for this contribution, which will help us accelerate our efforts to drive positive change in our communities.”