



To Our Members



Throughout her career, Helene has practiced and promoted the core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

T*his month heralds the arrival of Helene Weir as the new CEO of the Westport Weston Family Y.*

A seasoned YMCA professional with more than 22 years of front-line experience in the organization, Helene most recently served as Senior Vice President of Operations at Valley of the Sun YMCA in Phoenix. While there, she had oversight responsibility for seven branches with a combined budget of \$14 million.

Helene's professional accomplishments are notable and include a successful capital campaign for and renovation of the 36-year-old Chris-Town YMCA plus a financial turnaround of that branch which produced the largest surplus in the Association. She supervised a seven-branch annual campaign resulting in the highest percentage of members contributing in the Association and provided staff leadership on the development of the five-year strategic plan. During her tenure, Valley of the Sun YMCA realized increased revenue, membership growth and improved retention rates.

A native of Canada, Helene has called the United States home since joining Valley of the Sun YMCA in 2000. She has a demonstrated ability for strategic planning, fiscal management and development of community, volunteers and staff as a result

of experience gained at Valley of the Sun Y and while serving as General Manager of the YMCA of Calgary and Director of "Shape Up Alberta" at the YMCA of Edmonton. Her professional instincts have been enhanced by her involvement with the Kuala Lumpur YMCA as well as her participation in YMCA World Urban Network Leadership Training in Auckland.

Leading the organization in realizing its plans for Mahackeno, including reaching out to the community, the permitting process, capital fundraising, building and site plans, etc. attracted Helene to the position. She knows "this is an enormously complex initiative and an incredible responsibility" but says "we are working to provide a state-of-the-art community facility and I am thoroughly energized by the challenges and opportunities." *continued on page 5*

news

FROM THE GROUND UP

Leading Area Families “Imagine the Possibilities” of a New Westport Weston Family Y at Mahackeno



One year ago, three longtime and leading Westport and Weston families joined together to demonstrate their deep community support for the proposed Westport Weston Family Y facility at Mahackeno and to serve as co-chairs for the “Imagine the Possibilities” capital campaign.

The campaign family co-chairs are Ginger (Gault) and Jim Donaher, Nancy and Sam Gault, Bill Mitchell and Robin Tauck. Underscoring the multi-generational commitment of these families, William Gault and Arthur Tauck are serving as the campaign’s honorary chairpersons.

Each member of the Gault, Mitchell and Tauck families recognizes the Family Y has played a positive role in their lives over the generations. Like many other area families, they cannot imagine their community without a Family Y and understand the need to take what is good and make it better.

When the family members assumed responsibility for this fundraising initiative they issued a joint statement: “For more than 80 years, the Family Y has been helping to build strong families, which makes for a strong community. It is now time for our families to help build a strong Family Y; a facility that will serve future generations. A new Family Y at Mahackeno will be a one-of-a-kind facility in a spectacular location that will enhance this venerable organization’s ability to accommodate family activities. We are proud to be associated with a project that will become one of the true jewels of this community. It is an honor to have the opportunity to give back to this community organization in such a meaningful way.”



Arthur Tauck and Robin Tauck



Arthur Tauck, Bill Gault and Bill Mitchell



Sam and Nancy Gault, Ginger (Gault) and Jim Donaher, Nancy and Bill Gault

An Internationally-Renowned Architectural Firm with Local Talent

Robert A.M. Stern Architects (RAMSA) is a 200-person firm of architects, landscape architects, interior designers and supporting staff. Over its 35-year history, RAMSA has established an international reputation as a leading design firm with wide experience in residential, commercial, and institutional work. Currently, the firm has projects underway in twenty states as well as in the Netherlands, Germany, Canada, Spain, Japan, Mexico, Brazil and China.

The firm's practice is premised on the belief that each project should build upon the genius of the place in which it is found. RAMSA does not believe that any one style is appropriate to every building and every place. They know



Kevin Smith

that while past experience can inform the work process, they must always start a project with an open mind and a clean slate. RAMSA works to develop a distinctive and appropriate character for each of their projects – especially important for an organization such as the Westport Weston Family Y which serves an entire community.

Kevin Smith, Associate Partner and a graduate of Yale University (1980 B.A. cum laude; 1984 M. Arch.), has more than 20 years experience in architecture and urban design as a result of his work on projects ranging from the Spangler Campus Center at the Harvard Business School and the Campus Center and Communications Technology Complex at Indiana University/Purdue University to the New School of Business at the College of William and Mary and the new Museum Center at the Mark Twain House in Hartford.

This project is of particular importance to Kevin because it affords him the opportunity to create a state-of-the-art facility for use by families in the community where he lives. As a Westport resident, Kevin understands that developing this project in a manner

The facility is designed to provide ample space for programs and services – from gymnastics and dance to meeting rooms and babysitting.



First Floor



Lower Level

that benefits the larger community as well as Family Y members is of critical importance. His care and concern is evident in a building designed to provide ample space for programs and services the Family Y offers – from gymnastics and dance to meeting rooms and babysitting, while nestling the building into the naturally sloping terrain – reducing the visibility of the building from surrounding roads and neighborhoods and expanding access to and usability of the open space at Mahackeno.

Professional Consultants Guide the Development Plan

The Family Y staff and volunteers are focused on the requirements of planning a facility to optimal conditions and standards, the desire to build a facility which will enhance the appeal of the surrounding neighborhood and our community as a whole and our obligation to provide a high level of service to meet the needs of a growing and changing membership.

To ensure that we meet – perhaps exceed – the benchmarks we have established, we have engaged a number of professional consultants to address issues and opportunities related to environment, sanitary requirements and traffic.

- **Civil Engineering:** Land-Tech Consultants, Westport CT
- **Geotechnical Engineering:** Heller & Johnsen, Stratford CT
- **Hydrogeological Engineering:** Leggette, Brashears & Graham, Shelton CT
- **Landscape Architecture:** Andropogon Associates, Philadelphia PA
- **Land Use:** Redniss & Mead, Stamford CT
- **Traffic Analysis and Planning:** Frederick P. Clark Associates, Fairfield CT

Several of these firms have principals who are actively involved in one or more of the various project committees, well-versed in all project parameters and willing to extend their counsel and participation beyond the scope of work for which they are compensated.

This desire to perform above and beyond the expected is readily apparent in the work of Cory Attra, PE who serves as the Family Y Project Manager for this initiative. Following a path that began in Texas, continued through a stint as a Lieutenant in the Civil Engineer Corps of the US Navy and included earning an MBA from Columbia Business School, Cory brings both professional experience and a sense of community responsibility to the project.



Cory Attra



The Family Y staff and volunteers are focused upon designing a facility that will enhance the surrounding neighborhood.

Charged with managing the planning, project finance, design, permitting and construction of the new Family Y facility at Mahackeno, Cory's credentials include management of the Riverside Avenue General Business District Development project in Westport, conversion of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco and several major airport projects at Atlanta-Hartsfield International, Birmingham International and Newark. As well, Cory serves as Chair of the Inland Wetland/Conservation and Commissioner on the Water Quality Management Commissions in Weston where he makes his home.

Members of the Community Donate Time, Talent and Resources

Perhaps they are a neighbor, a colleague, a customer or a relative. So many in Westport, Weston and surrounding communities have stepped forward to assist with planning for the proposed Family Y facility at Mahackeno and are working to make it a reality. They include Bankers, Developers, Entrepreneurs, Financial Planners, Publishers, Realtors and Retirees who have volunteered their evenings and weekends, provided counsel and guidance in their area of expertise and paid or pledged to the capital campaign for this initiative.

And it's likely that most if not all of these individuals are known to members of the Family Y.



Helene Weir
continued from page 1

Though looking ahead, Helene declares the Family Y will not lose sight of today's priorities. "In our current location we must continue to deliver programming, activities and services to ensure a satisfying experience for all members and, indeed, everyone who comes through our doors."

Throughout her career, Helene has practiced and promoted the core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility, values which define each YMCA. This is the vision which informs her leadership. But she emphasizes this is but one facet of her approach. "The culture and personality of each YMCA also is defined by the community in which it is located. It is important to have a full understanding and appreciation of those distinctive features and characteristics." Helene plans to focus first on familiarizing herself with the people and particulars of Westport, Weston and the surrounding area.

"It is a privilege to be appointed as the eighth CEO of the Westport Weston Family Y. I hope members and visitors will share with me their thoughts so that my staff and I can be assured of advancing the Family Y in a manner which meets the needs and expectations of those we are dedicated to serve."



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QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS?

Troy Ellen Dixon
Senior Director
Development and Communications
(203) 226-8981 x106
tdixon@westport.org

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send your email address to:
imagine@westport.org

News & Notes

- WESTPORT DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION (*Westport News* – March 10, 2006): “It is still [our] preference ... to have the Y located in the downtown area [but] we have come to realize that the [organization] appears to have exhausted all efforts to remain [here] and therefore we support their proposed move to Mahackeno and hope it allows them to serve their members properly, now and in the future.

“[As a result of this move by the Family Y] there will likely be a significant *positive* long-term impact for both the downtown and the town as a whole. More variety of shops, restaurants, housing and theater, etc., will mean more general activity in downtown, especially at night, and greater sales possibilities for our merchants. This should translate into more sales tax revenue to the state, and greater property taxes [for] the town, since the Y currently pays no taxes for that property.”

- FAMILY Y MEMBER FORUMS: Keeping the membership and visitors to our facility informed about our plans and progress is a priority. We have been conducting a series of Member Forums – with Aqua Fitness, Camp Families, Spinning and WRAT Parents – which provide information about the proposed facility at Mahackeno, from building and site specifications to project developments and the permitting process. Results from exit surveys conducted at these Member Forums are encouraging: 95.9% of survey respondents like the new Family Y facility planned for Mahackeno.

Our goal is to reach as many people as possible by hosting separate forums or as part of a planned Family Y event. Following is the upcoming schedule of forums for which invitations will be extended:

- *Sunday, May 7 – Fitness Center*
- *Thursday, May 11 – Childcare*
- *Saturday, May 13 – Camp Mahackeno (Open House)*
- *Saturday, June 3 – Dance Center (Recital)*
- *Saturday, June 10 – Gymnastics (Exhibition)*

When you receive your invitation, please join us to see the plans for and share your thoughts about the proposed Family Y at Mahackeno.

From The Ground Up

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P.O. Box 190, 59 Post Road East
Westport CT 06881-0190
Tel: (203) 226-8981 • Fax: (203) 454-4840
www.westport.org