

## To the P&Z

The debate continues about relocating the Y from Westport's downtown area to Mahackeno. Amid the heated discussions, it's important for the elected and appointed town officials to recognize their massive responsibility of preserving the YMCA as an institution that builds community and unites men, women, and children of all backgrounds. After attending the P&Z meetings at Town Hall, I am thoroughly convinced that the board of the Westport Weston Y did everything it could over the last 5 years to secure an appropriate facility in the downtown area (a solution I originally preferred). In light of this unfortunate reality, the Y is faced with two stark choices: relocate to Mahackeno or cease its existence in Westport. The latter choice would be detrimental to the community of Westport as thousands of adults and children rely upon the Y for its diverse programs in athletics, arts, and socialization. Many of the children's programs are not offered at any other venue, especially for the younger age groups, at a time when laying down the foundations of athletic skills or performing arts are so important.

The primary argument I have heard opposing the relocation of the Y to Mahackeno, "traffic impact", seems more due to fear and less due to reason. Given that hundreds of kids, parents, and staff attend the Y's summer camp programs at Mahackeno (at a time of year that has heightened traffic conditions), I can't imagine a permanent Y facility there would exacerbate congestion. In fact, if these residents' chief concern is traffic on Route 33 at this location, why haven't they voiced their concerns prior to the Mahackeno debate since the traffic lights on both sides of the Merritt Parkway need improvements in timing between intersections to alleviate

*continued on next page*

## Letters to the Editor

*continued from previous page*

current traffic congestion throughout the entire year, independent of Y's summer activities?

I do not hold myself out to be an expert about the impact that the Y at Mahackeno would have on traffic conditions, or why its construction would have a greater environmental impact than the culmination of 6,000-plus square foot homes built in Coleytown less than a mile away. I do, however, have first-hand experience in witnessing the destructive effects that communities lacking in developmental services and programs have upon their children, adults, and economic welfare. To this end, Westport's P&Z Commission must ensure the continuing benefits that the residents of Westport and Weston derive from an enduring YMCA.

TOLY, KAREN, LAUREN  
AND SOPHIE SPHEERIS  
WESTPORT

In Connecticut, the Department of Children and Families is always looking for good foster homes. Our family became a foster home about four years ago.

One of the first children we had stay at our home was a four-month-old baby boy. We were told he would probably be with us for a couple of months. Two and a half years later, we were told he would not be able to return to his family.

We were asked if we would like to adopt him. It required no time for us to say Yes. Earlier this year, we completed the adoption of our now three-year-old son.

While adoption is not the intent for most foster parenting, it happens quite often.

Our son who also has other brothers who don't live with us has also been a positive influence on our 10-year-old daughter who proudly states that she has multiple brothers because of our involvement with foster parenting.

If you are looking for an opportunity to make a difference in someone's life, please consider becoming a foster family. For more information, please contact the local Connecticut Department of Children and Families office at (203) 899-1400.

KIM, MARK, NICOLE AND  
NICK MATHIAS  
WESTPORT