



OGI: One Great Idea

Ideas that Matter from the YMCA World Urban Network (WUN)

Every YMCA has them - ideas that matter. Practical and innovative ways in which YMCAs are making a difference in the lives of a young person, a community, a country. **One Great Idea** is a new initiative from the YMCA World Urban Network (WUN) designed to reveal great ideas with WUN members, who in turn are invited to share them widely within their networks. Our objective is simple: shine a light on solutions that work.

This month, we are pleased to spotlight Phillipa Spicer, Chief Executive of the YMCA Fairthorne Group in the UK:



What is your current position?
Chief Executive, since 2022

YMCA History?

I joined the Y in 2016 as CFO and became CEO when Chris Hand retired

Your post-secondary education?

Honors degree and Fellow of Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

How many people are served by your Y?

40,000 children and young people, over 8 locations

Who is your role model:

There are people I admire for different reasons, including Nelson Mandela (I'm South African), Dave Ball (retired CEO of YMCA Thames Gateway Group), and my Mum

ONE GREAT IDEA – May 2024

YMCA Fairthorne Group, UK

1. What is your idea?

A staff engagement survey in June 2023 illustrated that employee wellbeing was an area we could improve in, bringing initiatives to our 450-strong workforce across a large geographical area to support our Y's mission of 'helping children, young people, and families to belong, contribute, and thrive'. This Great Idea focuses on the thrive aspect.

2. What opportunity or problem does your idea address?

To promote a positive work environment, actively encourage and protect employee wellbeing, which in turn promotes employee engagement, morale, and performance.

3. Why was this idea important to your Y?

Our new Wellbeing Strategy aims to 'provide experiences that challenge, develop, and enable the individual' and is underpinned by our values: welcoming, active, listening, inspiring, caring, and exciting. The purpose of our Y is to 'partner with communities so that children, young people, and families can belong, contribute, and thrive', and if we don't start with ensuring our workforce is ready and engaged, then we're unlikely to have the social impact that we want to achieve.

4. How did you get started?

We started with a small focus group that created a Wellbeing Strategy aligned with our People Strategy. The Wellbeing Strategy includes 4 pillars of wellbeing (Health, Good Work, Values/Principles, Growth), a vision, and aims & objectives. Once we had the strategy, we created a plan of action. A wider Wellbeing Champion group was formed and includes representatives from each sector of the charity to oversee implementation, raise awareness of health and wellbeing, consider how initiatives might be developed and funded, and measure outcomes. Under each pillar, the champions aim to create a proactive wellbeing environment and culture which will Promote, Provide, and Protect our employees:

- Promote positive wellbeing, diversity, and inclusion and prevent discrimination by increasing awareness of health and wellbeing and valuing differences
- Provide a psychologically safe environment with open dialogue and communication around mental health and wellbeing, creating a sense of belonging based on shared values
- Protect employees by reducing stigma around mental health and wellbeing issues

What is your idea of a perfect day?

My perfect day always starts with a cup of coffee in bed

Who would be your dream companion over lunch?

Blink 182 drummer Travis Barker

What is the trait you most dislike in others?

Dishonesty

What do you consider to be your best quality?

Resilience!

What is your greatest success?

Overcoming adversity to start a youth group in my hometown, which now has a regular following of 80+ kids

What are you currently reading?

The Conscious Effect: 50 Lessons for Better Organizational Wellbeing by Natasha Wallace

Well Worth Reading

YMCA colleague and WUN member David Paterson, CEO YMCA South Australia, has published a book entitled:

Growing on Purpose: Strategic Clarity for Purpose-Driven Leaders

For more information click here: www.growingonpurpose.org

5. Where does funding come from?

The Wellbeing Group has been provided with a small budget of up to £5000 for self-led initiatives and training.

6. How did you get buy-in on the idea?

We started small and the group was formed by word of mouth. We were realistic when looking at what the champions could do alongside their usual role. At present our philosophy around engagement is currently, 'if it helps one person then it has been a success'! Our Board is supportive and engaged with the work of this committee.

7. How does the idea work?

The Wellbeing Champion group meets regularly to share ideas, attend webinars, and hold forums. They have created a Wellbeing Calendar for 2024 and planned ways to promote topics via posters, Staff Facebook, and events. A wide range of topics are covered from national days, mental health, careers, and finance, encouraging staff awareness and signposting. Examples:

- *January:* Brew Monday instead of Blue Monday – Our chef prepared brownies which were distributed to our branches in person by our Wellbeing Champions, employees were encouraged to enjoy a cup of tea and chat with their colleagues – this was well received.
- *March:* Employee Appreciation Day – Postcards were designed and distributed to branches, and employees encouraged to write a card to a colleague.

The group are also looking into MHFA (mental health first aid) training for managers and building a network across the charity, should employees wish to seek support whilst in the workplace.

8. How do you, or how do you plan to, measure effectiveness?

We have already celebrated some success as measured through our Employee Engagement Survey. Our wellbeing score in June 2023 was 66%, compared to our recent half-year results of 73% in February 2024. We will also look at engagement, employee sickness, and retention. The wellbeing team also plan to conduct their own mini wellbeing surveys in the future for feedback.

9. What have you learned from the process thus far?

Small steps can often make a difference but don't be put off trying. You might make lots of effort and not think anyone is engaging, but persistence will pay off and results will come.

10. Where can YMCA colleagues get more information?

Speak with our wellbeing lead: Rachel Searle, email: rachel.searle@ymca-fg.org



REGISTER NOW!

WUN 2024 Conference in Bogotá Colombia: Monday, November 4 – Saturday, November 9

Plan to join your YMCA colleagues from across the globe as the WUN gathers in Bogotá, Colombia, this coming November (4-9 November 2024). Our conference will be held at the Marriott Bogotá, and will focus on adaptation in response to the growing complexity associated with YMCA leadership. Our 2024 program will include Bogotá YMCA engagement, cultural opportunities, and a Companion (spouse/partner) Program.

~Click [here](#) to register~