

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 Michael Tsiamis, Group Manager with YMCA Queensland:



What is your current position?

Group Manager - Fitness & Recreation with the YMCA of Queensland, Australia

YMCA History?

I joined the Y in 1997 as an Assistant Manager - Fitness, and moved to my current role in 2001

Your post-secondary education?

I hold a Diploma in Sports Science and a BA in Human Movement

How many people are served by your Y?

1.2M people are involved in our programs annually

Who is your role model:

My father

Who would be your dream companion over lunch?

My dad, who I lost to cancer. I would love to tell him what has been happening, how mum is, and how his grandchildren are going in life and succeeding.

ONE GREAT IDEA – June 2024

YMCA Queensland, Australia

1. What is your idea?

The **YMCA Cancer Survivor Program** is a free, 12-week exercise program where survivors attend the YMCA twice per week for a 60-minute session. The aim of the program is to empower cancer survivors to improve functional capacity and to increase their quality of life through an organised program of fitness and strength. Additional goals include reducing the severity of therapy side effects, the prevention or minimisation of unwanted bodyweight changes, and the improvement of energy levels and self-esteem.

2. What opportunity or problem does your idea address?

The program meets the needs of a community that is currently only being met in a limited capacity by hospitals. It is an innovative program that targets those who are currently going through cancer treatment or who are currently in remission. Exercise has been proven to enhance recovery of treatment as well as improve survivors' sense of wellbeing. This program increases the cancer community's health through participation in physical activity.

3. Why was this idea important to your Y?

Nearly everyone's life has been impacted by cancer in one way or another. When you look at the statistics where there is an average of 379 new cases of cancer diagnosed each day in Australia (that's close to 1 new case every 4 minutes), something needed to be done to help this community of people living with and beyond this disease. In fact, the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) states that: "Oncology services are finding it increasingly difficult to provide high quality follow-up care to all survivors as numbers grow and resources do not match the growth."

4. How did you get started?

The program was launched in August 2016 with a pilot program. Within the first few weeks, we knew it was here to stay because of the feedback and results from the participants. Testimonies reinforced the physical and mental improvements, but also the social aspect and sense of belonging.

In 2017, we rolled the program out and, to date, 854 people have gone through our program. Our program offers 2 phases. Phase 1 is the free 12-week program. Phase 2 offers the participants to continue in a group session at a discounted membership. Of the 854 participants that have completed phase 1, 361 (42%) have gone on to phase 2.

What is your idea of a perfect day?

A beach holiday with my family

What is the trait you most dislike in others?

When they do not show respect or hold themselves accountable

What do you consider to be your best qualities?

Reliable, empathetic, supportive

What is your greatest success?

Working at the Y for 27 years, and my 2 girls

What are you currently reading?

Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships, and Being Ridiculously In Charge, by Dr. Henry Cloud

What would someone be surprised to learn about you?

Competed in State and National Kayak competitions(K1)

What is your personal motto?

Trust God

Well Worth Watching

From **WUN Chair Carolyn Morris** of the YMCA of Victoria Australia, a funny but (sadly) true parody of non-profit fundraising...

<https://bloomerang.co/webinar/video-what-if-pizza-shops-were-funded-like-nonprofits/>

5. How does the idea work?

All sessions are conducted in groups of up to 12 participants under direct supervision by qualified YMCA Wellness Coaches. In addition, patients are encouraged to complete a home exercise program that is provided. The program has been reviewed and approved by staff at the Mater Cancer Foundation and the University of Queensland's Human Movements department. We understand that a Cancer patient's journey is all about uncertainty and treatment. A major component of our program is to give participants a safe environment that is not about their medical journey with Cancer but their holistic journey on health and wellbeing.

6. Where does funding come from?

The program is seen by our Y as a benevolent program/service. We continue to seek grant and sponsorship opportunities for the program.

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

At the end of the pilot program, the fitness team met to hear testimonies from those who had completed the program. We heard about not only the physical and mental improvements, but also the social aspect and sense of belonging. Friendships were formed not only with each other, but also with the YMCA staff. A supportive community was established. The program has been reviewed and approved by staff at the Mater Cancer Foundation and the University of Queensland's Human Movements department.

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

Testimonies are priceless. We also do data collection through a wellbeing survey administered both at the start and the end of program.

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

That there is a need for this program and the value it brings to those living with cancer. At present, Cancer alone costs the Australian health care system more than \$4.5 billion of their budget in direct costs. When those living with Cancer exercise, it gives them a fighting chance as exercise is a form of medicine.

10. Where can YMCA colleagues get more information?

<https://ymcafitness.com/fitness/cancer-survivors>



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~