



BUILDING POSSIBILITIES

YMCA OF SOUTH PALM BEACH COUNTY

The Y TIMES Newsletter | Fall 2025

BUILDING POSSIBILITIES

Support the Y and make an impact!

Did you know? Your YMCA membership helps keep the lights on — covering essential costs like operations, equipment, and programs — but it's **your generosity** that helps us do so much more.

Through our **Annual Giving Campaign**, we invite members, staff, and friends to help us go beyond the basics — funding life-changing programs, scholarships, and resources that strengthen youth, families, and seniors in our community.

Together, we can ensure that everyone has access to the Y and the opportunities it provides. Your gift makes a difference where it matters most — right here in our community.

This year our Annual Giving Campaign is chaired by YMCA of South Palm Beach County Board of Trustee member, Nicole Grimes and our 2025 fundraising goal is \$1,204,000. All funds raised benefit our Y's financial assistance program, which help our community by:

- \$50- Scholarships a teen with a month of membership to the Y, providing a place for belonging, leadership and achievement.
- \$150- Allows one special needs child the ability to learn life-saving water safety swim skills by providing one-on-one lessons.
- \$250- Provides a month of after school care filled with learning opportunities and positive role models for a deserving child.

- \$500- Scholarships a Cancer Survivor 24 sessions of LiveSTRONG programming to rebuild a community for improved fitness and quality of life.
- \$1,200- Gives 12 youth a season of volleyball, basketball or soccer, allowing them to learn the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship while improving their health and wellness.
- \$2,500- Scholarships one child to a full summer of camp, giving them a safe space to learn, grow and have fun.
- \$5,000- Provides 50 children the ability to learn life-saving skills with a session of 8 group swim lessons.

Interested in being an Ambassador for Annual Giving Campaign?
Visit YMCASPBC.ORG/AGC or contact the Boca or Boynton YMCA.



INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH THE YMCA



Nicole Grimes

Trustee Board member of the
YMCA of South Palm County
Community Resident for 40+ years

You're a long-time resident of South Palm Beach County. How have you seen its civic needs change?

Lack of affordable housing is a critical issue: residents face soaring rents, displacement, and increased homelessness.

Strong communities support the less fortunate. What causes do you personally find most compelling and why?

I'm most drawn to causes that treat people as whole humans, not just problems to be solved—especially when they address root causes, not just symptoms.

You've donated to the YMCA. What was the focus of your investment and why did you pick the Y as a vehicle for that gift?

The Y isn't just a gym—it's a trusted, rooted, and scalable community asset. I focus my gift giving on unlocking opportunities for kids and families to succeed.

How would you describe the YMCA's community role to someone who's just moved into the area?

The Y is a great place to meet people, stay healthy, get involved, or give back. Whether you're looking for a workout, a volunteer opportunity, or a way to help your kids thrive, the YMCA is the BEST place to start.



MEET OUR DeVOS-BLUM YMCA STAFF

Yarelis Leon Aquatics Director

Education: B.S. in Physical Education, University of Physical Culture and Sports Sciences (Cuba) "Manuel Fajardo"

How long have you been working at the Y? I have been working for different YMCAs for the past 10 years.

What was your career prior to working at the Y? Assistant Athletic Director (in Cuba)

Why are you passionate about working here at the Y? When I first came to this country, I looked for swimming pools because my English wasn't very good, but I knew I could still teach swimming

without needing perfect English. I started working at the YMCA as a swim instructor and lifeguard, and my favorite part was seeing how the Y supports the community and helps children with different disabilities. I've stayed with the Y because it gives back to the community – which reminds me of Cuba, where giving back was always important to me even though opportunities to do so were limited.

Who and/or what inspires you? My family inspires me.

Anything else you would add? I am enjoying my new position as the Aquatics Director at DeVos-Blum Family YMCA and the new challenges it brings.

EVENING OF ENCHANTMENT

Since opening its doors in 2000, the DeVos-Blum Family YMCA has become a cornerstone for youth, families, and seniors alike. From life-saving swim lessons and enriching after-school programs to the beloved annual Golf Classic and Halloween celebration, the Y continues to create opportunities for everyone — regardless of their ability to pay.

On December 6, 2025, the Y will mark this milestone with An Evening of Enchantment 25th Anniversary event.. Presented by Baptist Health, the

Boynton YMCA will be transformed into a captivating setting for an unforgettable night under a grand outdoor tent by Grimes Events & Party Tents. Guests will enjoy the electrifying sounds of the Headliners Band, sponsored by Plastridge Insurance Agency, along with delicious dinner, dancing, a silent auction, and more.

Please join us in this remarkable celebration! If you are interested in purchasing a table, ticket or becoming a Sponsor of this event, please visit YMCASPBC.org/25Years



IMPORTANT DATES

October 24 & 25, 2025

The DeVos-Blum Family Y and Peter Blum Family Y will host a spooktacular **Halloween at the Y** for the community.

YMCASPBC.ORG/HALLOWEEN

November 8, 2025

Presented by JM Family Enterprises, the **Corporate Cup Challenge** is our Y's premier adult field day held at the Peter Blum Family YMCA.

YMCASPBC.ORG/CORPORATECUPCHALLENGE

December 6, 2025

Presented by Baptist Health, celebrate 25 years of the DeVos-Blum Family YMCA at our **Evening of Enchantment** event chaired by Amanda Perna.

YMCASPBC.ORG/25YEARS

December 7 & 14, 2025

The DeVos-Blum Family Y and Peter Blum Family Y will host a holiday festive **Breakfast with Santa**.

YMCASPBC.ORG/SANTA

February 25, 2026

Presented by JM Family Enterprises, the **24th Annual Inspiration Breakfast** will feature the inspiring man whose true story is featured in the 2025 film **Soul on Fire**, a two-time bestselling author of **On Fire**, and courageous burn survivor, **John O'Leary**! This event will be hosted under a grand tent at the Peter Blum Family YMCA.

YMCASPBC.ORG/INSPIRATIONBREAKFAST

Visit our website for the latest updates on YMCA events and activities: YMCASPBC.ORG/EVENTS

THE CHANCE TO WIN

Adaptive swim program brings one young swimmer to success in recent state championship—and beyond

Written by DeVos-Blum Family YMCA Board Member, Kelley Marcellus

Eight-year-old **Samuel Marinho** is making headlines that his parents Patricia and Alex never expected. In September, the youngster won silver medals in freestyle and backstroke events at the state championships for the Special Olympics in Sebastian, Florida after learning to swim through the adaptive swim instruction program at the YMCA of South Palm Beach County and finding success in regional meets.

As a toddler, Samuel was always attracted to the water, and when he turned 3, his mother signed him up for group swimming lessons.

"I don't swim, and I wanted him to learn so he could be safe," Patricia recalls. The lessons didn't go as expected. Samuel was having a hard time with the setting and unable to fully participate in the class, so his parents withdrew him.

Shortly after, they enrolled their son in preschool and experienced some of the same behaviors.

"His teacher thought maybe he was too young, but he wasn't," Patricia says. They tried three more schools before a teacher suggested that perhaps Samuel was autistic.

The concerned parents took their son for evaluation and doctors confirmed the diagnosis. Samuel was high functioning, but on the autism spectrum. Samuel is intelligent and eager to learn—he loves



figuring out how his bicycle and other mechanical things work. He's thriving as a homeschooled student who studies Latin, drumming, and takes therapeutic horseback riding lessons. But, learning environments where neurotypical children thrive are often difficult for him.

Enter the Y's adaptive swim instruction program. Referred to by a friend, the Marinhos had to wait months for an opening for the program at the Peter Blum YMCA in Boca Raton. Once Samuel got in the water, his instructors, Coach Miguel Blanco and Jeff Burgazzoli delivered lessons in a manner suited to Samuel's learning style.

"If he has a moment where he's not cooperative, the coach realizes it's not

because he's misbehaving, it's because his processing is different," Patricia says. "They have tools to work on the process."

When the Marinhos relocated from their home in Broward County to one in western Lake Worth, they continued to travel to the Boca pool until the DeVos-Blum YMCA in Boynton Beach launched its adaptive swim team program, which they now recommend to other families with children on the autism spectrum.

Samuel is finding success as a competitive swimmer, but his mom notes that even that requires some adaptation. Her son can be unnerved in unfamiliar surroundings, so she tries to give Samuel time to adjust, reminding him that they will travel in a car for a certain amount of time to reach the new pool. She tries to arrive a day early, so he can swim in the pool and become familiar with the surroundings before the competition day.

"Change for Samuel is very hard," she says. "We have behavior challenges. We have anxiety. When people see a child with autism, they might think that he's just behaving badly. Here, we have a community where people have compassion and understand us. Here, they see Samuel's heart. Here, I can relax."

And here, Samuel and other children like him, know what it means to win.

THANK YOU FOR THE GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM OUR GRANTS AND SPONSORS*

Boca Raton Regional Hospital Foundation
Children's Healthcare Charity, Inc.
– The Cognizant Classic
City of Boca Raton

Parkinson's Foundation
Pool & Hot Tub Alliance

*As of October 10, 2025

Casino Night

A winning hand for the Y! From blackjack to poker, guests had a blast at Casino Night 2025, a Boca Chamber Festival Days event in support of the Y's Financial Assistance Program. Huge thanks to our sponsors and Event Chair, Mario Bai for making the night unforgettable!



Shoot for a Change

The Peter Blum Family YMCA came alive with energy at our 6th Annual Shoot for a Change! From fast-paced 3-on-3 games to 3-Point and Free Throw contests, players of all ages showcased their skills while helping raise \$16,479 for the Y's Financial Assistance Program—making Y programs accessible to everyone in our community. Big thanks to all event sponsors and our event chair, Michael Nathanson for his dedication to this event year after year.



Adaptive Swim Team Goes to the Special Olympics

Our Y proudly celebrated two amazing swimmers who showcased their skills at the Special Olympics State Games in Sebastian, FL — and they rocked it! This is the first time our Y has participated in any of the Special Olympics games and we are incredibly proud of all our swimmers! A heartfelt thank you to the Florida Blue Foundation, Boca West Children's Foundation, Justin Freedman & Family, and all our Adaptive Aquatics sponsors for helping make these achievements possible.

