



# 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 feature an innovative idea from the **YMCA of San Francisco** compliments of its leader  
Jamie Bruning-Miles*



*What is your current role/position?*  
President & CEO, since 2020

*What was your role prior to the YMCA?*

I have been with the Y for 34 years. I started working the front desk at the Y in my hometown of Tavares, Florida. Cumulatively I have worked in more than 5 different YMCAs.

*Your post-secondary education?*

BA in Education from the University of Central Florida.  
Master's Degree in Nonprofit Organizational Leadership from Springfield College.

*How many people served by your Y?*

YSF serves more than 113,000 individuals at our 15 branches and more than 320 program sites

*What is your idea of a perfect day?*

Early morning workout, time with my husband and our dog, and dinner with friends. Just a day in the company of others.

*Do you have a role model?*

Barack Obama. He has the perfect balance of intellect, humility, and courage. Add in his values to his family and you have a leader I would love to emulate.

## ONE GREAT IDEA – January 2024

### YMCA of San Francisco (YSF)

#### 1. **What is your idea?**

Create a new branch within our YMCA association that focuses on mental health. This branch will look to deepen and expand our current work in mental well-being as well as provide a new lens to how we approach whole person wellness across our association.

#### 2. **What opportunity or problem does your idea address?**

The groundbreaking ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) study showed us the undeniable link between mental wellness and physical health – specifically how poor mental health can have a detrimental effect on physical wellness, contributing to significant health risks and chronic diseases. The recent pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues and we have yet to understand the complete impact on our society's mental health. We are seeing a significant gap between the need for mental health support and available resources, especially in underserved communities.

#### 3. **Why is this idea important to your Y?**

This effort is a foundational element of our 2030 Vision strategic plan and is a cornerstone of 2 of our 5 strategic pillars. This plan was informed by the voices of over 1,000 individuals across our service area.

#### 4. **How did you get started?**

Our journey started in the early 1980s with the acquisition of 3 Youth Service Bureaus – community-based mental health clinics started in 1969 in an effort to offer alternatives to jailing youth who were first time offenders. We began to evolve the idea of utilizing mental health principles in service delivery via our Reach and Rise program, which was created to teach therapeutic principles to volunteer mentors, supervised by mental health clinicians to support 'at-risk' youth through a scalable model that does not rely on having to have one-on-one therapy sessions.

Another program that evolved was the School Safety Advocate program, which was created in response to the 1999 Columbine (Colorado) school shooting tragedy. Mental Health clinicians were placed at school sites to offer drop in and crisis support, along with consultations and training to teachers. The success of these programs in addressing emerging needs led to our realization that we needed to bridge the physical and mental health worlds.

#### 5. **How does the idea work?**

Long term, the Mental Health Branch will be open to all individuals/members served across YSF in all 3 counties, including youth and their families, seniors, adult, wellness members, etc. Areas of focus include:

- Existing programs and services
- Alignment – between Health Initiatives and Mental Health Departments
- Centralization, Standardization, Quality/Compliance, Grant and Contract and Training Support
- Expansion (new grants, support for any mental health efforts)

*What's the trait you most dislike in others?*

I like healthy debate, so I struggle with overly agreeable personalities. I want to know what you stand for, so I can understand you.

*What's your best quality?*

I over-think everything, which helps me navigate my organization – I'm also learning when to turn that off.

*Your most treasured possession?*

My college education. Material objects are temporary to me, but experiences like graduating from college is something that is permanent, and I value it greatly.

*What is your greatest success?*

I would say the COVID response during the pandemic. It took everything out of me and the team that rose from that effort makes me proud to be with them every day.

*What is your greatest fear?*

Failure

*What are you currently reading?*

*Living Like you Mean It*, by Ronald J. Frederick. My therapist recommended it, and it is the first time I have found actual techniques you can use to lean into who you are to be better for others.

*What would someone be surprised to learn about you?*

My goal is to limit surprises, so hopefully I am authentic enough to not be able to answer this question.

*What is your personal motto?*

Karma is powerful, so treat others well.

#### **6. What funding is required to implement the idea?**

Funding is mostly governmental grants and private foundation dollars. We also leverage mental health trainees – graduate students finishing their graduate degree in counseling who need to complete a 1-year internship – to provide direct mental health treatment to clients.

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

Through the creation of our 2030 Vision and Strategic Plan, our communities (members, staff, volunteers, board, etc.) all elevated recognition of increased community need and challenged YSF to step forward in this area. In short, we listened to community.

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

By 2030, we hope to have achieved the following:

- Address gaps in services such as supporting our adult and active older adult populations, since currently our work is mostly focused on youth
- Create centralized support and expertise to address challenges faced within branches (e.g. crisis situations; provide support to staff teams who have experienced trauma; consult on meeting the needs and addressing challenges within Youth Development programming to work toward reducing suspension and expulsions from programs)
- Establish a dedicated infrastructure to envision, co-create and implement mental health services with member experience and health initiatives teams
- Provide dedicated support/infrastructure for increasing funding to expand services

#### **9. Where can people get more information?**

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### **Bonus "Shout Out" of the Month:**

Congratulations to Medhat Mahdy, former President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Toronto and a long-time member, leader, and supporter of the World Urban Network. Medhat was recently honoured with an appointment to the Order of Canada – the Nation's preeminent civic award recognizing those who make a major difference through lifelong contributions in every field of endeavour. Medhat's unwavering dedication to building community and improving the quality of life for all in the Greater Toronto Area is an example for each of us.

