



Dear Directors, Trustees, and Staff:

For over 165 years, the YMCA of Greater Hartford has helped people in our community develop their fullest potential in spirit, mind, and body by living out our universal values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility each and every day. As the country continues to react to the events in Charlottesville, Virginia, I would like to reflect on the YMCA of Greater Hartford's commitment to its central values of diversity and inclusion of all, and on the story of how one small action we took has resonated with thousands of others.

The YMCA of Greater Hartford continues to take part in a larger conversation around inclusivity. At the Y, we welcome people of all sizes, colors, genders, beliefs and religions. We are a safe place for all. That truth goes right to the core of who we are as an organization and is as important at promoting as any program we run.

What is wonderful is how strongly that message has resonated in recent weeks, as evidenced by the response we've seen to an image posted on our Facebook

page. The image is of a sign we have hanging in our Glastonbury branch, which reads: "We welcome all sizes; all colors; all genders; all beliefs; all religions; all types; all people; everyone. Welcome to the YMCA. You are safe here."

Our [Facebook post](#) has reached more than 170,000 people thanks to more than 820 people sharing it on their own Facebook accounts. More than 9,000 people have "liked" the image, and dozens of Ys across the country have asked if they may reproduce the sign for usage in their own branches of course we said yes! It was posted before the violence in Charlottesville, but has only picked up momentum in the days since.

The YMCA of the USA has also taken the time to share our post, and CEO Kevin Washington [shared his own thoughts](#) on how the YMCA's mission aids unity and acceptance.

We are heartened and emboldened by the response to this post, which is way beyond what we ever imagined. Our hope is that the viral dissemination of this image will serve to continue the dialogue surrounding inclusivity in our community and others across America, and we know that the YMCA of Greater Hartford will continue to play a key role in promoting inclusion of all.

Thank you for your commitment towards making the YMCA of Greater Hartford an open and inclusive place for all.

Sincerely,

Harold Sparrow
CEO of the YMCA of Greater Hartford