EUGENE FAMILY YMCA

THIS IS Y

Capital Campaign Community Phase

In 2012, the Eugene Family YMCA launched a capital campaign for a new Y to serve thousands of new members, create dozens of new partnerships, bend the medical cost curve, and expand its ability to address the acute health and education needs in the communities it serves.

The current 48,000-square-foot building, constructed in 1955, was designed to serve a community of about 50,000 people and is now inadequate, inefficient and in structural decline. The current location has not been able to accommodate the numbers of people seeking disease prevention, wellness, healthy living and fitness programming nor is it able to expand into new areas to address community challenges, such as the need for Parkinson's programming or more teen mental health outlets.

By June 2021, Y leaders had successfully completed the first 9 stages of Y-USA's Capital Planning and Development Resource Guide, including securing the location of the new Y (2 blocks south of the current location) and raising $37 million, which included $15 million in lottery-backed state bonds from the legislature (first authorized in 2019 but derailed due to the global pandemic).

The project, originally estimated at $26 million a decade earlier, had increased to $42 million. The project had been escalating at $100,000 per week or approximately $450,000 per month. It was clear that Y leaders needed to finalize a contract with the construction company and break ground quickly to avoid escalating prices, ramp up awareness of the project and inject significant momentum into the campaign.

The challenge: Our community was still reeling from the effects of COVID-19. March 2021 marked the lifting of the indoor mask mandate but, even as of December 2022, Y membership still has recovered only 87 percent of its pre-pandemic levels.

The original plan of launching a $1 million Community Phase with a Community Carnival was reimagined. In a mere 6 weeks, the Y team pivoted to launch a $5 million Community Phase, sans a community-wide event, with the distribution of a press release, direct mail, a news e-blast, a printed newsletter, internal and external signage, a social media campaign, and a comprehensive website.

On November 15, 2021, the Eugene Y announced the THIS IS Y Community Phase of the Capital Campaign.

Local magazine ad

The power of this campaign lay in the selection of volunteers to publicly lead the fundraising and the strategic use of matching gifts. The THIS IS Y Community Phase was led by co-chairs, cousins and young mothers Julia Stiltner and Kendra Goldberg, Chambers Family Foundation trustees. They invited the community

to complete the new Y fundraising, launching with a $500,000 challenge match. (Note: The Chambers Family Foundation donated $1.5 million to the project 5 months earlier.)

Chamber of Commerce Email Advertising

For the launch, Kendra stated, "We want our community to know that they have the chance to have a profound impact on the final push for the last dollars—this much-needed community center will be built because people recognize the importance of a thriving Y in their community."

Throughout the course of the Community Phase, 3 challenge matches brought inspiration and critical amplification of the message to donors: "The Time is Now! The Y is Closer Than Ever!" The $500,000 match that launched the campaign, by a family previously supported by the Y's financial assistance program, was met in fewer than 6 weeks and resulted in a donation that launched the second match of $250,000. When fundraising efforts reached the $3 million mark in May, the Y initiated the final challenge match of the community phase: a $1 million gift made by the Tykeson Family Foundation. Communication around donating to the final push for the new Y continued even as the new Y broke ground at the end of June!

In September of 2022, 10 months after the launch, more than 825 donors had raised more than $5 million for the new Y. It marked the successful completion of a campaign that many had said was not possible in Eugene, metropolitan population 180,000.

Over the course of the 10-month campaign, the following communications strategies were initiated to ensure its success:

- The release of 9 press releases, which inspired more than 22 news stories across several media outlets
- The update of critical campaign materials: the brochure, new interior & exterior signage, and a multiple-page website within our organization's website
- Seven public events to inspire and energize our community, including our largest event: Groundbreaking
- Promotion of an inspirational campaign video & project endorsements
- 3 printed newsletters that launched, updated and marked the completion of the THIS IS Y Community Phase
- Cultivation of medical providers after the endorsement of a local medical society
- Email updates to donors, volunteers and Y members
- Stewardship of Board members and the Capital Campaign cabinet for letter-writing campaigns
- A dozen presentations to local groups, including Rotary and Active 20-30

Facebook post

With the exception of some outside professional services, the planning, design and production of the campaign was managed internally. Total cost: $66,700.

Given the tight timeline, magnitude of the ask, coordination of the campaign volunteers, consistent and powerful messaging, orchestration of sustained interest/awareness of the new Y and its impact in the community, and effective execution and remarkable adaptability on the heels of a global pandemic, we believe this campaign deserves recognition as Best Overall Campaign in its class.