



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

SUBMIT YOUR Y STORY

MARIE LANSDOWNE'S Y STORY

Marie's family moved back to Sherwood, OR several years ago. While she was familiar with the Sherwood Regional Family YMCA, she was hesitant to walk inside and try the Y. Marie used to think that members of the YMCA fit into the young, thin, attractive, put together and Christian category. She believed that she wouldn't be included if she attended the Y.

One day, her friend convinced her to attend a Zumba® class at the Sherwood Y satellite site—Boones Ferry Community Church. "I loved it! I adore loud fast music, and Zumba® had just that. Mary, the instructor did such a good job teaching and I really enjoyed the class."

Marie mustered up the courage to attend one of the Y's water exercise classes. "I mustered up the courage to try out the pool. Much to my surprise and delight, there were many women in the locker room that looked just like me ... there were people of all abilities and ages. I wasn't exactly comfortable, but I wasn't intimidated." Marie soon after became a Y member.



" I TRY TO START MY DAY THINKING, HOW CAN I MAKE OTHERS FEEL WELCOMED?"

Marie began attending Zumba®, water exercise and Yoga classes at the Y. Marie's knees began to prevent her from exercising standing up, so she still attended her Zumba® classes, and completed them sitting down. No one at the Y made her feel bad for working out differently than the rest of the class, "People would tell me 'Good for you!' So I never felt too odd working out that way." After some surgeries, she came back to the Y and continued in some water exercise classes.

Marie compliments the staff at the Sherwood Y for their ongoing friendliness and welcoming attitude to everyone—regardless of their background, what they look like and their ability. "I came here with a walker and then a cane, and all those times, no one looked at me funny. It was always 'Oh good! Marie is in the pool today.' They only cared if I was here."

Marie says that the values of the Y are seen throughout her interactions with front line staff and fitness instructors. She notices how they treat those who are different, and she is encouraged by how the staff interact with others—how inclusive the Y is. "I thought that you had to fit into this physical look to come to the Y, but I'm so glad that wasn't true." She recognizes the kindness of our Y staff is because of our focus on and training of our Christian principles and heritage.

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Marie works hard to include those who are new to her water exercise classes. She tries to serve them with kindness and welcome them to the Y family. "There are a lot of lonely sad women out there ... and a lot of them don't have anyone at home so if I can bring a little friendship into their lives, I'm happy to."

Marie is grateful the Y is not what she first thought. She hopes that others can begin to learn more about the YMCA and what it offers. "There might be other people that thought like I did. That there are all kinds of people that come here—don't have to look a particular way to be here." Marie is grateful for how affordable the Y is too. "Sometimes I think I should be paying more for what I've received so I make sure to donate back what I can at the fundraisers."

"MUCH TO MY SURPRISE AND DELIGHT, THERE WERE MANY WOMEN IN THE LOCKER ROOM THAT LOOKED JUST LIKE ME."

Marie knows that it takes courage to go into a pool to exercise, so she will encourage newcomers to workout next to her, to make a friend, or make them feel welcomed. Marie uses some phrases in other languages she's picked up in her travels to help make others feel included. "When I wake up, I try to start my day thinking, how can I make others feel welcomed?" Several of the Sherwood staff have helped Marie feel welcomed and valued, her Zumba® instructor Mary and AOA Program Director, Caz. Both have been great resources for her, as she received valuable knowledge to help her get the most out of her exercising and recovery process. "They don't have to help me, but they do, and they are so kind about it too."

Since joining the Y, Marie has received a lot from the community here. She attends the Lunch N Learns with some friends, water classes and other active older adult events. She has been able to learn a lot from the workshops, and values that these professionals who share information with the community help seniors become more aware of pressing issues. These opportunities add to her community, and have given her some friends that she can go out with on occasion.

Marie is hopeful that the future of the Y will continue to grow more inclusive, more kind and serve more families and seniors. "Someone in their 20s can go anywhere to work out, but this is a great place for families and seniors to come and build community." She hopes that there will be more ways in the future to get more seniors to the Y so they aren't as lonely.

Several of Marie's goals for her future at the Y include continuing to befriend more people and help them feel comfortable in class. She wants to continue to work out in the water and get to the point of walking on the track. Her biggest goal is to help others the way that she has been helped at the YMCA.

Thank you Marie, for sharing our Christian principles of service and love to those in the community. We are grateful that you are part of our family and ensure that others experience the Y.

We want to hear from you! How has the Y impacted you or your family's life?

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