



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE Y. SO MUCH MORE.

Jen Smith

My name is Jennifer Smith. I have been a YMCA member for 20 years. I was a single mother with my 4 year old son. Someone suggested I join the Y and I laughed, because I could barely afford groceries! I was invited to apply for financial aid. The process was painless, you told them what you could afford (I think it was \$10!) and in exchange volunteered some of your time. For us, the Y was our salvation! We did not have money to go to the movies, Waldameer or whatever else we did back then! We were ALWAYS at the Y! My son gained friendships he still has to this day. I could spend the whole day sharing what I gained (or rather what I LOST!) mainly I made friends, lost some weight and gained much needed confidence. Flash forward...by a series of good timing, good luck, determination and hard work I am most fortunate to be in a financial position where I no longer need financial assistance; on the contrary, I continue to volunteer at speaking engagements and my younger daughter assists at various events (i.e. Healthy Kids Day) and in the daycare. I don't know that people REALLY understand what a valuable asset the Y is to the community, You think, "it is a gym", however, it is SO much more than that, for some people it is their only outlet for companionship, the sports and group activities offered are endless, back in my bleakest times, it was a healthy meal (sadly, the largest he may have eaten that day) for my son.

Through a strange series of events, I have re-invented my entire life! I am a fitness-a-holic and work out all the time. In the past 2 years I have lost 82 pounds. I went from a size 16 to a 4! More importantly, surely through the confidence learned through these programs, I was promoted several times at work to a management position; I see it as a pyramid that keeps growing...surely because of THAT, I have branched out of my comfort zone & tried the craziest things: 5Ks, mud ruds, I am going to dance in my first recital! It just keeps getting better; because of THAT I have made the most amazing friends, whom I consider an extended family. I am grateful EVERY day for where I have landed in life; it is rare to be given a second chance at life!

**Learn more about the Y's impact and why your gift matters at
www.WeBuildPeopleErie.org**