

YMCA Mergers

John F. Flynn 23 January 2013

Effective January 1, 2013, the YMCA of Philadelphia & Vicinity and Freedom Valley YMCA merged to create the brand new Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA. The approval of this new YMCA was ratified by members and board members from both organizations. With this ratification, the newly formed Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA will be one of the largest YMCA associations in the country, with 15 branch locations located throughout Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties and serving nearly 140,000 members.

With any merger, there are challenges that need to be addressed immediately. For the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA, some of those challenges include working to ensure that an acceptable governance structure is established, unifying the cultural gap between the two organizations, adapting a new staffing structure and ensuring that all members understand the value of a larger organization.

Now with an enhanced pool of resources, the YMCA will have a greater impact on the communities they serve. As one of the largest YMCA associations in the country, the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA will be in a position to increase charitable support, have a greater ability to attract top volunteers and staff, expand growth and new

branch development and lastly, to have more influence locally, statewide and nationally on issues relevant to the realm of services that the Y provides. After due diligence and a thorough evaluation, the benefits of merging the two organizations far outweighed the challenges.

As a larger organization, the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA will have more opportunities to leverage existing partnerships, such as those with Independence Blue Cross, Comcast and United Way; and to expand their mission—to translate the principles of the YMCA's Christian heritage into programs that nurture children, strengthen families, build communities by developing healthy spirits, minds and bodies for all. On a larger scale, the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA will have the ability to garner more federal grant funding and to have a stronger voice throughout the national YMCA movement.

The Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA will position itself as a premier nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the foundations of communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Some of the social and health-related issues that plague communities across the Delaware Valley will be addressed by the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA. These issues include but are not limited to: addressing the learning gap, nutrition, and healthy living for youth; providing first-class programs to tackle obesity, pre-diabetes and other health issues for adults; and, continuing to grow volunteers and create a culture of

community that establishes the Y as a charity of choice. Together with staff, volunteers and donors, the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA will remain dedicated to providing exceptional service to members and communities at large.

The assistance received from the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania Strategic Partnership Initiative grant, positioned the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA to have an even greater impact in the region. The YMCA will also garner more resources to help finalize the following deliverables: organizational document review (articles of incorporation, by-laws, conflict of interest statements); tax review (IRS exemption letter, recent 990s); insurance assessment (public liability, officers and directors insurance, fire and workers compensation); personnel review (current employees and pay levels, contracts, personnel policies, volunteer policies and retirement benefits); financial assessment (current operating budgets, copies of loans/liens, and listing of liabilities and assets); capital/real estate review (deeds, leases, zoning and permits); other information review (copies of operating leases, promotional materials and any agreements between the organization and any federal, state or county agencies).

The Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA believes real progress is only possible when we work together—as a community. The YMCA provides opportunities for neighbors to understand and help each other toward a

better future in small ways and large. Through this merger, the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA will have a greater impact on youth, adults, families and active older adults for generations to come.

Author Bio

John F. Flynn, President & CEO, Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA.

John F. Flynn has been a YMCA executive director for 35 years. His YMCA career spans from Massachusetts to New York and, most recently, the greater Philadelphia region. Throughout his career, Flynn has been associated with fast-growing Ys and through fundraising initiatives has partnered with community leaders to build countless new Ys for the communities he has served over the years. He spearheaded a merger of YMCA's in upstate New York that established the Y as a premier human service organization. Under his leadership, the Ys he oversaw raised in excess of \$100 million for their annual funds, capital projects and endowments collectively.