



# YMCA Stronger Together Gala Celebrates Historic Merger

Community Volunteers will be Honored at the Annual Event on Sept. 27

By [The Community YMCA](#) | Aug 14, 2019 6:26 pm ET | Updated Aug 15, 2019 7:49 pm ET

*This post was contributed by a community member.*



David Hernandez, Owner of Old Bridge Funeral Home, will be honored with the Y's 2019 Distinguished Citizen Service Award. (The Community YMCA)

The Community YMCA and YMCA of Western Monmouth County will celebrate coming together as the newly united YMCA of Greater Monmouth County and honor influential community leaders at their Stronger Together Gala on Friday, Sept. 27, 6-11 p.m., at The Addison Park in Aberdeen.



“The Stronger Together Gala will be the highlight of an exciting and historic year for the YMCAs of Monmouth County as we join forces as one Y to strengthen the foundation of our community,” said Laurie Goganzer, president & CEO of The Community YMCA. “We are looking forward to honoring five dedicated volunteers who’ve been instrumental in helping the Y increase its impact.”

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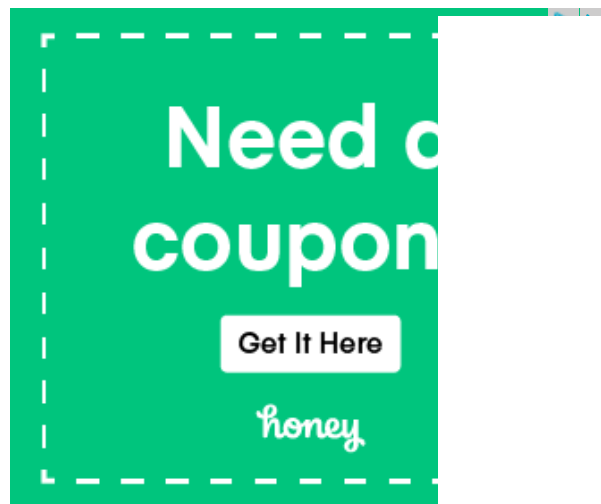
The two YMCAs have been transforming lives in Monmouth County for 145 years and will officially merge on Sept. 1, 2019 to become the YMCA of Greater Monmouth County, the second largest YMCA in New Jersey with Goganzer serving as president and CEO.

The celebratory gala will recognize volunteer leaders and friends of the Y as follows:

- Marti and Bruce Huber, Red Bank, will be presented the Legacy Award for their significant impact on the community over the lifetime of their involvement with the Y. Supporters of The Community YMCA since 1993, the Hubers have secured over \$1.5 million in support for Y scholarships, and were influential in fundraising for the Red Bank YMCA in the 1980s and establishing The Community YMCA Foundation. Bruce Huber served as a board member of The Community YMCA in the 1960s and as a trustee from 2009-2017.
- David Hernandez, Old Bridge, will be presented the Distinguished Citizen Service Award for his outstanding community service. Hernandez is the owner of Old Bridge Funeral Home, incoming president of the Old Bridge, Sayreville & South Amboy

Chamber of Commerce, and a board member of Raritan Bay Medical Center in Old Bridge.

- Jennifer Lakefield, Colts Neck, will receive the Visionary Award for her ongoing commitment to strengthening communities and planning for the future of the Y. As chief volunteer officer for The Community YMCA, Lakefield helped guide the successful merger of the two Ys. She learned to swim at the Y and participated in many youth development programs. She has served as a Y board member since 2012 and has been appointed chief volunteer officer of the YMCA of Greater Monmouth County.
- Stacey DeAlmeida, Marlboro, will receive the 2019 Volunteer of the Year Award for her outstanding volunteer service to the Y. DeAlmeida served on the board of the YMCA of Western Monmouth County for six years, and as board chairperson since 2017. She has also served on the executive, finance, governance, fundraising and gala committees for the YMCA.



The gala is the Y's most significant fundraising event of the year. Leading the gala committee are co-chairs Irene Hall, of Rumson, and Lauren Berke, Manalapan. Hall serves on the Y Board of Directors and is an active member of the YMCA. Berke's family operates Encon Mechanical & Service in Ocean, a business that has long supported the YMCA of Western Monmouth County.

Proceeds from the gala will support the Y's financial assistance scholarship program that gives kids, teens and families in need access to affordable childcare, swim lessons, summer camp, therapeutic counseling, college readiness and other life-changing programs.

The benefit will feature music by The Infernos Band, which has performed for President Barack Obama, New Jersey governors and for audiences across New Jersey and around the world. The evening will include cocktails, dinner, dancing, gift auctions and inspiring stories about the Y's impact.

Individual tickets, sponsorships and digital ads are available and can be purchased at [one.bidpal.net/strongertogether](http://one.bidpal.net/strongertogether). For more information, contact Stacy Vasta at 732.671.5505, ext. 120, or .

### **About The Community YMCA and YMCA of Western Monmouth County**

The Community YMCA and YMCA of Western Monmouth County are two of the area's leading nonprofit charities coming together as the YMCA of Greater Monmouth County on Sept. 1, 2019 to strengthen communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Guided by core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility, we are dedicated to helping everyone grow in spirit, mind and body regardless of age, income or background. Our programs and services nurture the potential of children and teens, improve health and well-being and provide opportunities to give back and support our neighbors. In 2018, we provided \$925,000 in financial assistance to strengthen approximately 3,000 families in need. For more information, visit [www.ymcanj.org/strongertogether](http://www.ymcanj.org/strongertogether).





Event co-chairs Lauren Berke and Irene Hall organize a night to support the good work of the YMCA and celebrate the merging of The Community YMCA and the YMCA of Western Monmouth County. (The Community YMCA)

YMCA Gala Honorees (from L to R) Marti and Bruce Huber, Jennifer Lakefield, and David Hernandez. (The Community YMCA)

Bruce and Marti Huber, long time supporters of the YMCA, will be honored with the Legacy Award at the Y's Annual Benefit on Friday, Sept. 27. (The Community YMCA)

Chief Volunteer Officer of The Community YMCA Jennifer Lakefield will be honored with the Y's Visionary Award for her outstanding leadership over the past seven years. (The Community YMCA)

Stacey DeAlmeida, board chairperson of the YMCA of Western Monmouth County, will be honored as the Y's Volunteer of the Year. (The Community YMCA)

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