

SIoux YMCA SUMMER GUMBO GAZETTE



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

General Convention of Sioux YMCAs

PO Box 218 Dupree, SD 57623

Summer 2014

OUR MISSION IS TO DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN OUR RESERVATION COMMUNITIES SO THEY CAN FULFILL THEIR GREATEST INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SPIRITUAL, MENTAL, AND PHYSICAL POTENTIALS.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Hello again, and welcome! Once again we are whizzing through the summer with all kinds of activity here at our Y. The weather may be cool, but our programming is HOT! Amazing things have been happening at the Sioux YMCA, and we would like to share them with you.

First of all, we have a new camp director this year. Her name is Courtney Russell, and she is full of energy, good ideas, and has not been intimidated by the task of operating a resident camp.

We have added a new full time staff position which is Site Director. The person who has been filling these new shoes since the first part of April is Andy Corley from Massachusetts.

We also have a new bookkeeper/office manager in the person of Medina Matonis. Medina is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and lives in the community of Iron Lightning. As you read on, you will learn more about our new staff. We hope that you are as impressed with them as we are.

We have some additional "staff" again this summer thanks to the Sioux Initiative program which is administered by the **YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities**. This is the eighth summer for this program, and it has been expanded to 7 teams and 14 weeks. We are grateful!!!!

-Carol Mann, Executive Director

If you are interested in receiving Gumbo Gazettes **electronically**, please send your email address to

amanda.held@siouxymca.org

MEET OUR NEW STAFF!

Courtney Russell, Camp Director

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I'm from Charlevoix, Michigan. I graduated from Northern Michigan with a bachelors degree in Outdoor Recreation, Leadership, and Management. I also have an associates degree in Early Childhood Development. I have worked for the YMCA in Marquette County, Michigan and the YMCA of the Rockies-Estes Park.

Why did you choose to come work for the Sioux YMCA?

When I first came to visit, I thought South Dakota was beautiful. Then I met the kids and realized that this was the place I was meant to work. The kids are happy, even with little equipment with which to work and play. I thought that I could work with the Y and Carol to better our organization for the community.

Why did you want to be a camp director?

I grew up going to camp every summer on scholarship. I saw this position as an opportunity to give back. Something magical happens at camp. There, problems melt away and kids can just be kids which is one of the things that makes my job so great!



What do you find most fulfilling about your job?

To see a child whom I met in January, who would barely talk to anyone, lead a song in front of 50 people at camp is very fulfilling. Also, I can see the children growing at camp, even though they're only there for a short amount of time.

What's your favorite camp activity?

All of it! Camp songs and kayaking.



CAMP WISH LIST

- Mattresses or mattress pads for the cabin bunk beds
- Water shoes for campers
- Arts and crafts supplies
- Gift cards to Walmart, Sam's Club, and/or Hobby Lobby
- Flashlights (and batteries)
- Bug spray



Andy Corley, Site Director



Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in Boston Massachusetts. I am 24 years old. I graduated from Bridgewater State University with a degree in Exercise Science. I ran track and field in college. This is my 7th year with the Y. I worked at Camp Burgess. I was a counselor, Waterfront Director, and Assistant Director. During the off season I was an Outdoor Education Leader for the facility.

Why did you choose to come work for the Sioux YMCA?

I feel as though the site and community chose me and not the other way around. When I first came here it felt like I needed to be here. For some reason I was drawn to this place.

Why did you want to be a site director?

The Site Director is a brand new position. I thought that left me with plenty of wiggle room and space to make the program after my own ideas. It really gave me the freedom to drive the facility the way I wanted it to run.



What is the most fulfilling part of your job?

The most fulfilling part of my job is opening the doors and seeing kids eager to come in. The fact that they are waiting and wanting to come in day after day means I am doing my job right. There is no real way to measure success, so I base it off the progression the children in this community have made. If they are doing well I know I am doing well.

What is your favorite activity?

My favorite activity is Capture the Flag. No excuses—if I see those cones lining up I'm out on the field. It combines all of my passions: playing, running, competing, and fun. It is such a good game that teaches people to play fair and to do their best. I could be in the middle of a conference call, if CTF is going on, I am hanging up, sorry.

SITE WISH LIST

- Playground set
- Monkey bars
- Swing set
- Jungle gym
- Sandbox with a lockable lid
- A vehicle to transport the kids to day hikes and other trips
- A plane to take the kids all over the country to see what this globe has to offer

Medina L. Matonis, Bookkeeper

Medina L. Matonis is the Sioux YMCA's new Bookkeeper/Office Manager. She started in March and fits in perfectly with our needs. Medina moved her family back to the area a year ago from Virginia. She is the proud mother of 3, one in Paramedics school in Florida and two that attend the Dupree School and have attended the after school program, the Leslie Marrowbone Memorial Camp and Summer Day Camp at the Y. She is also the proud wife of a Navy Veteran from New York. Medina grew up in the community of Red Scaffold, she attended schools in Red Scaffold and Takini before her marriage took her on an adventure to Edwards Air Force Base in California and retiring at Patuxent River Naval Air Station in Maryland. Medina has a long history in the Banking and Financial Industry. During her time away from home, she gained experience and knowledge of life off the Reservation, made lifetime friendships and in the end returned to the place she grew up. Medina and her family currently reside near the community of Iron Lightning. When not at the Y during normal business hours or going above and beyond her job description, she is continually renovating her home.

When asked what she likes best about working for the Sioux YMCA?

I LOVE the kids! Even though I am in the office at my desk most of the time, I hear them laughing and running around and enjoying themselves. The kids are familiar with me and are comfortable around me; a majority of them also know my two youngest children from school. Working at the Sioux YMCA is just an extension of my family and at the end of the day the rewarding feeling I get from working for such an amazing organization that is doing an awesome and superb job at loving and caring for these amazing children is priceless.



Amanda Held, Long term volunteer

Amanda is the Sioux YMCA's first long term volunteer in a while and she will be with us for a year. She is from a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and is a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in genetics. In her senior year she discovered the Sioux YMCA in an old book called *Alternatives to the Peace Corps*. She visited the Y one weekend in April and decided that she would like to lend a hand to an organization and its staff that give so selflessly to such a special community of kids. Amanda hopes to establish a community garden at the Y as well as a long term volunteer program before her year is up. She enjoys working and playing with the children at the Y, who make her laugh a lot. Arts and crafts time is her favorite part of the day. While Dupree is a big change from the city, her transition has been made easier by the kind and welcoming people of the Y community. After her time in Dupree, she wants to go back to school to earn her masters degree in social work so that she can be a therapist.



The Journey to the World Alliance Conference

4:30 AM wakeup call; I stretch as I try to shake my body awake. My bags are all packed and ready to go. I stumble into the living room half asleep. There is a sleeping Kenton on my couch; I wonder how he slept through my alarm ringing. Reaching out I shake him awake. We both sit silently as we eat breakfast. We hear a car door shut and see Demi walking down the driveway. Carlys is just a few minutes behind her. The group loads the trunk and pile in the car. We drive down to John's house to pick him up. The team is all here and we are ready to go.

It is an eight hour and twenty four minute drive, covering a total of five hundred and twenty one miles. The ride is going smooth; we stopped in Rapid City and again in Wyoming for food and fuel. The back seat occupants sleep for the majority of the ride. As the miles go by and we get closer and closer, the energy starts to pick up. We start singing songs and telling stories. Finally we enter Colorado and the excitement is palpable.

The number of miles drops to double digits; we are only minutes away. We have seen the landscape transform from the rolling prairies in South Dakota into the majestic Rocky Mountains. The road has evolved from mile long straightaways to twists and turns every couple hundred feet. At last we see the archway marking the entrance to The YMCA of the Rockies!

We drive to a parking lot and start walking around the beautiful YMCA grounds. There are people everywhere. Every person we pass greets us with a smile and a hello. I have never felt more welcomed. We find the check-in station and people start approaching us. John recognizes and introduces the gang to several friends he has met during his time with the Y. After we check in and have made several friends quickly, it is time to unload the car.

The group makes the decision to try and meet as many people possible. They challenge each other to connect with as many different people as possible and collect the most business cards. As the days pass by there are more in depth discussions in small groups and as a Y entity about Youth Empowerment. As Y's, we are to make movements to create **Space, Transformation, and Impact** for the youth in our YMCAs. The Space aspect is creating positions or opportunities for our youth to develop. They need a chance to become leaders in our community so that they can undergo Transformation. The Transformation step is where they learn that they are the people that will make the difference. There is no age limit that you have to surpass in order to become an influential leader. The youth see the issues that are passed on to them. They need to be the ones that change the communities; they are responsible for the Impact. The Impact is the actual change that they make. We learned that we are at the beginning stages of this new change model. We have to create Space for our youth in the community.

The three steps to the Change Agent Model were the driving force behind the Conference and were in direct correlation with the week's theme of Youth Empowerment. As our team met new faces and spread the message of our organization, we realized that we are one of the few Y's that are strictly dealing with Youth Programming. The week went on to include creating new contacts across the country and across the globe. Y's all over want to create exchange programs, and to see our corner of the world.

As the final days passed it was hard to say good-bye to the wonderful people of the World Council. All the delegates from the Y's surrounding the Earth were gathered for the magical experience at Estes Park, Colorado. There were many brilliant minds sharing their creative juices. The week was a once in a lifetime experience. The team had a glow of passion in their eyes as we packed the car up and started our journey back home.

Written by Andy Corley



So Many Volunteers

This YMCA has been fortunate in having lots of folks come and volunteer in several different ways during the past few months.

First to come were the college students on alternative spring break programs. Students from Mt. Ida College in MA and from the University of IL came out in March, and Central Michigan University came in May. The students spent their week on the reservation learning about Lakota culture, working with the After School Program, and helping out in our pole barn organizing supplies and equipment. One group also washed walls in the Y building, and another group had the opportunity to visit Camp Marrowbone.

In May we hosted a group from Spokane, WA and a group from Oklahoma City. The Spokane group was led by Rich Wallis, Sioux Y Trustee and volunteer. He and three friends came to Dupree for a week to help build three more cabins for camp. The group from Oklahoma City consisted of three of their YMCA staff, one Sioux Y Trustee, Bill Townsend, and his friend.

What a week to be here, it rained on and off during several days they were here which made working on the cabins challenging, but they were up to the task. They were joined mid-week by Carolyn Creager, a newly retired Y-USA staff member. Carolyn has since agreed to serve on our Board of Trustees.

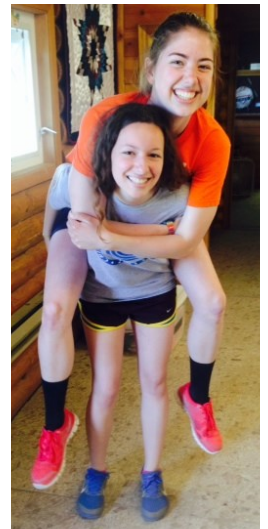
The cabins were finished, and the group even found time to build a small landing and railing for the FEMA trailer entrance and two new picnic tables for the Y building. The two

existing picnic tables received much needed coats of paint so now they are bright and cheerful. All four tables have been used all summer for our Summer Day Camp and Summer Food Program. Many of the kids eat their supper at those tables every day, and this has worked out really well for us.

Two former REACH teens (REACH is a program of the Becket Chimney Corners YMCA Camps in MA that sends teens out to visit us for two weeks each summer) came to volunteer for two weeks at camp in June. Emma and Hannah came from NY and helped to set up camp and then worked the first week of camp as counselors. Hannah decided to stay and work for the summer at camp, and Emma is back this August to help with the last week of camp.

Not all of our volunteers come from out of state. Many live right here on the Cheyenne River Reservation. The teens who traveled to Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA in North Carolina in July for the Christian Values Conference and those who attended World Council also gave of their time. They do this to give back to the Y for making their trips possible.

Last, but most certainly not least, is the Sioux Initiative which was mentioned earlier. This fabulous group of Y staffers from the Twin Cities, YMCA of the USA, and Darien, CT conducted programming in 7 of the reservation communities here on Cheyenne River Reservation. In all, 20 people gave of their time to come out and play with the kids.



Jessie

Meet Our Youth Workers

Hello, my name is Jessie Garter and I'm going to be in the 9th grade this fall. Hi, my name is Rameil Romero and I'll be a junior. We are a part of the Summer Youth Program at the Sioux YMCA. The program is through the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. We work for four weeks. With our earnings we're going to go shopping for school clothes and go to the Central State Fair.

How long have you been involved with the Y?

J: Kindergarten. I used to follow my cousin down to the Y. She would use the computers and I would color.

R: I've been coming to the Y since I was six years old. I would always come with my childhood friends.

What's your favorite part about the Sioux YMCA?

J: Dupree is boring, but it's better down here because there's always fun things to do.

R: When I was little, I loved meeting volunteers and playing games. Now I love that the Y is much more organized. Also, when you work here, you get a lot of exercise. If I didn't have this job I'd be a couch potato.

J&R: This is where we met all of our friends.

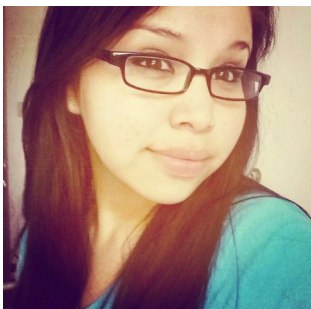
What have you learned through the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)?

J: How to clean! And a sense of responsibility.

R: The Youth Program is great because it helps you get a job. It gives you good experience. The SYEP keeps kids out of trouble. Last year there were 16 kids who were able to work, and this year there are 60!

What's your favorite Y activity?

J&R: Tag!



Rameil





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Summer 2014

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