



COURTNEY McKEARIN
Association Manager, Swim Lessons
The Y in Central Maryland

WINNER:
Y-USA's Emerging Leader Resource
Network 5th Annual 30 Under 30 Award



Submission from Amy Vendt, Executive Director, The Walter & Betty Ward Y in Abingdon

- Why are you nominating this individual?

Courtney always goes the extra mile. If there is a special event that needs a lead or an idea for creative programming Courtney is your go to person. The relationships she builds with members are personal and long lasting. She has a special empathy for children and families with diverse abilities and has a gift for helping them feel welcomed at the Y.

- Professional Achievements

Courtney created an adaptive swim lesson program which paired swimmers with a variety of disabilities one on one with an instructor. Prior to Y-USA releasing their training she had written curriculum for her instructors as well as in-service trainings to prepare them to work with diverse populations.

In the "coming out of COVID" period, Courtney has continually exceeded her goals (financial and enrollment) for swim. At a time where many of our centers had shrinking participation numbers hers continued to grow. It is the same with her staff team. While many of our centers are struggling to find guards and instructors hers continue to stay and her team is growing.

- Community Contributions

Courtney has developed strong relationships with two local organizations to offer free Safety Around Water programs as well as family nights for their constituents. Anna's House provides housing for those parents and children who are homeless due to domestic violence and the Judy Center works to improving the quality of life for families from lower income/poverty. Through a dedicated staff of early learning professionals, they help prepare children age birth through kindergarten for school readiness Courtney 's partnerships with the above have helped the Y provide a safe space for the families to congregate as well as teach a lifesaving skill.

- The economic and cultural climates of our world and country today have created opportunities for the Y to address community needs in new and

innovative ways. Please share ways in which the nominee has worked towards strengthening community amidst these new challenges.

Some the partnerships that Courtney has developed would not have come about without the renewed focus on community since the pandemic. Courtney has worked to create fun and safe spaces in the pools for various groups to come together. She continues to focus on new ways to offer Safety Around Water to those who could not otherwise afford swim lessons

Courtney's Story in Her Own Words:

My Y story has everything to do with where I come from, Eastern Kentucky. I am actually a backyard drowning survivor. My brother and I were left unattended at our backyard in ground pool in Kentucky when I was 6 years old. We had just learned to swim that summer, and we were actually playing a game we made up called "lifeguard" where we tied my mom's 3lb dumbbell weights to each other's feet and got in the deep-end of our pool and waited for the other person to rescue. My brother tried it first but was a lot stronger than me so he was able to tread with 3lbs of weight on his feet with no issue. For me, as soon as I stepped into the deep side of the pool I sunk and did not resurface. I still remember the fight to get to the top. I remember the panic looking back at my brother who was too young to know that I was not pretending to drown. I remember being so close to the top when I eventually went unconscious. I survived because my brother did end up pulling me from the water and yelled for our dad who luckily had just taken a CPR class at his part time job a few weeks before the incident. My dad started CPR immediately and was able to bring me back to consciousness, and then I was transported to the local hospital where I was monitored for a few days.

This story is significant to me because I know that if my parents has been given the information on drowning prevention that the Y provides to the community that this could have been a different story - it could have never happened. I also know how lucky my family was that day. It is so sad that there are families who lose children every year in this way. I fortunately did not develop a fear of water and continued to love to swim in the summer. I even taught a few younger family members how to swim until I graduated high school. In college, my favorite classes were classes in the pool, and it was in my undergrad that I really began to think about career options and how I could work in Swim.

My first full time job was with the Y as a Swim Coordinator. In my first year, I became certified as a YSL trainer so I could teach others how to become a swim instructor. I also started an adapted swim program at my center. Our safety around water offerings as well as our parent child programming are my favorite classes to be a part of because I know firsthand how important it is to talk about drowning prevention at a young age. The reality is that i grew up in an underserved area and the information just wasn't there. The closest Y was an hour away and no one ever talked to me or my brother about drowning prevention prior to this incident. My parents didn't know the importance of watching your kids after they learn to swim.

We truly just didn't know. The Y has provided me such a unique way to impact my community, and I hope to use my experience and background to be a positive influence to all the people I encounter daily! In my spare time I love to spend time with my husband and our two daughters, roller blade with my dogs, or travel to new places. I also enjoy binge watching a good TV series from time to time.