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THE Y IN CENTRAL MARYLAND
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Monday, Aug 26, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

What an incredible summer we've had! Our Y has been buzzing with energy as we navigated this busy season and embraced the transitions of summer. Thank you for being [*All In on Community*](#) as we continue to see such good success with the innovative strategy we've implemented. We are immensely grateful to each of you, our great Y associates, for making a meaningful impact on our members across all Y points of access. As we officially close out the summer and begin a new school year, we're excited to strengthen our organization's capacity to deepen that impact by promoting three talented leaders and welcoming four new leaders to our team.

It is with great pleasure that I announce the following well-deserved promotions:

Diara Jackson, LCSW-C, has been promoted to **Senior Executive Director, Social Emotional Learning**. Diara continues providing technical assistance and support across our programs, and now leads the team launching new evidence-based programs in 13 Y Community Schools. With nearly \$2M in funding from the Maryland Community Health Resource Commission, these programs will have a profound impact through preventative social-emotional learning supports and responsive strategies focused on repairing relationships and resolving conflicts. Additionally, Diara will now oversee our mentoring portfolio of programs, including Big Brothers Big Sisters at the Y, Reach & Rise, and Badges for Baseball. Diara reports to Charmayne Turner.

Connie Schyan-Cusato has been promoted to **Executive Director, Before and After School Enrichment**. Recently, Connie assumed full operational responsibility for all 37 Y Before and After School Enrichment sites. Thanks to her leadership and our team's efforts, we are already 90% enrolled for this school year! In her expanded role, Connie will also provide leadership support and coordination for Schools Out Day programming across all Y Family Centers. Connie reports to Dana Ashley.

With **Dawn Edwards-Smith's** recent transition to North Carolina after 34 years of dedicated service to the Y, **Juana Oluwole, M.Ed.** has been promoted to **Senior Manager, Learning and Development**. Juana will lead instructional design and content management for our learning and development initiatives, including the introduction of multilingual on-demand training for Y associates. Juana will report to Dawn Crystal-Wolfe.

I am equally thrilled to welcome the following exceptional new leaders to our organization:

Crystal Brice, Senior Executive Director, Baltimore County Head Start. Crystal joins us from The Center for Model Schools, where she excelled in supporting and coaching principals in several school districts nationwide. With a career that began as a classroom teacher and evolved through roles as a principal, school district administrator, and

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Executive Director at the Maryland State Department of Education, Crystal brings a wealth of experience to our Head Start team. Currently pursuing a PhD from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, she will now lead Y Head Start and Early Head Start operations in Baltimore County, following Debra Barrett's recent retirement. Crystal reports to Amy Taylor.

Dr. Mia Mackey, Executive Director, Head Start Services. Mia joins our Head Start team from the Low Income and Investment Fund in Washington, D.C., where she managed the program implementation of over \$42M in early childhood education grant investments. With a background that includes roles at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Danya International, and as an Early Head Start Director, Mia's knowledge is invaluable in our efforts to evolve our Head Start programming. She earned her PhD in urban sociology with a minor in education administration and policy from Howard University. In her new role, Mia will spearhead the integration of Head Start and Early Head Start services across all three regions. Mia also reports to Amy Taylor.

Tavon Copes, Executive Director, The Y in Druid Hill. Tavon comes to us with more than 25 years of experience in community engagement, fitness and retail management—a unique combination that perfectly suits him to lead a Y Family Center. Most recently, he managed the Denton A. Cooley Center at Johns Hopkins Hospital and holds certifications in personal training, nutrition, and group exercise. Tavon will now take the helm of the historic Y in Druid Hill as it continues to pilot our innovative health equity programming and sustain its record growth in membership. Tavon reports to Donald Eaddy and Sharon Lacy.

Anthony Strickland, Executive Director, The Walter & Betty Ward Y in Abingdon. With nearly 15 years of Y experience across various programs including camp, teens and membership, Anthony is a seasoned Y professional. He has worked in five Y associations in Pennsylvania and Delaware and recently served as the Director of Programs for the Summer Learning Collaborative in Delaware. Anthony holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from California University of Pennsylvania and will officially join us at the end of September. Anthony will report to Becky DeFebo.

Please join me in celebrating our colleagues' exciting new roles and giving a warm welcome to our newest team members!

My best,
Derryck

Derryck D. Fletcher (He/Him)
Chief Operating Officer
The Y in Central Maryland