



May 30, 2026

Dear White Bear Y Community Members,

As summer soon arrives and the days stretch longer into warm, sunlit evenings, there's an unmistakable energy all around us. This season invites us outdoors — to gather, to move, and to reconnect with one another. It's a time when doors open: doors to new experiences, deeper connections, and moments that bring our community closer together.

Here at the White Bear Area YMCA, those doors are always open — to wellbeing, connection, and a sense of belonging. Every day, people walk through our doors looking for something, whether that be movement, friendship, support, or simply a safe place where they can show up authentically and be accepted just as they are. It is inspiring to see how our members, staff, and generous partners (like you!) continue to create that welcoming spirit together.

Reflecting on the first part of the year, I'm excited to share a few highlights and updates:

- This winter, our **Mariners Competitive Swim Team** made us incredibly proud by **placing 3rd** at the State competition, with **77 swimmers** representing the White Bear YMCA. Their dedication, teamwork, and perseverance are a wonderful example of the strength and spirit that thrives here.
- We've also continued our partnership with the **White Bear Lake Area School District**, welcoming **more than 600 second graders** to the Y annually for swim lessons and water safety education. For many of these children, it is their first experience with swim instruction. Teaching water safety **opens the door for young swimmers to gain confidence in the water** and is an important part of serving our community — an investment in their wellbeing that will last a lifetime.
- This past fall and winter, we had the joy of hosting several memorable community events, including an incredibly successful **Trunk or Treat** in October with our partners at Catalyst Church, as well as our **first annual Gingerbread House-making event** in December, which became an instant favorite that we're excited to continue this year.
- Another highlight of the winter was our **Annual Book Swap**. What began as a one-week event quickly grew when members generously donated so many books that we were **able to keep the tables stocked for two full weeks**. Many people cleaned out their bookshelves and discovered new stories to take home — proof that shared stories can spark community in the simplest ways!
- At the end of 2025, **changes to SilverSneakers Medicare coverage** created uncertainty for many of our older members. What followed was a powerful reminder of what makes the Y special. Many members stepped forward with donations to **ensure we had scholarship funds available** for those who might need support to remain active at the Y. It was truly heartening to see neighbors helping neighbors and the care our community has for one another.

- Despite the shakeup with insurance coverage for some members, our **ForeverWell community** continues to thrive. This winter, we were able to bring back **pickleball lessons** and introduce a new drop-in activity, **Walking Soccer**, held on Fridays at noon. From the gym to the pool to our studios, classes continue to be well attended as members focus on staying strong, healthy, and connected.
- This past month, we launched our **Unlock It Adventure at Woodland Hills Park**, the beautiful park just behind our Y. Unlock It is a **free, self-guided scavenger hunt experience** that turns local parks and trails into an adventure for all ages. We are thrilled to offer this new activity and encourage families to get outside, walk in nature, explore, and spend meaningful time together.
- We will celebrate summer at the Y with our annual **Backyard BBQ Open House** in August. It is always a fun evening full of hot dogs, yard games, laughter, and community building. Everyone is welcome, and we hope you will join us!
- **Summer Power and Summer Sports Camps** will also return soon, bringing with them the sounds of kids' laughter, the smell of sunscreen, and the unmatched energy of summer activity once again filling the building.
- We remain grateful for the many **community partnerships** that help extend the impact of our Y, including the **White Bear Lake Area Fire Department**, which uses our pool to keep their water rescue skills sharp. **U.S. Navy recruits** also train here as they prepare for their swim and fitness tests. And each month, the **American Red Cross** hosts a blood drive in our building.

Behind each of these bullet points are real people and real stories, and your support as a donor plays a role in every single one. That's the kind of impact that doesn't always make headlines, but it's felt every day in the lives of those we serve.

And now, as we head into summer, my team and I are excited to keep building on this momentum — creating more opportunities, deepening connections, and continuing to show up for our White Bear Y community in the ways that matter most.

Thank you for being an important part of our story. We're so grateful to have you alongside us through every chapter, and we can't wait to see what we'll make possible together in the months and years ahead!

Wishing you a bright and memorable summer,



Cynthia Ellickson
Executive Director, White Bear Area YMCA