Children in Old Colony Y’s Family Services programs participate in virtual learning activities.

As classroom learning moved online in the spring, students without access to wireless internet and the necessary devices to keep up with their peers suffered, further exacerbating the already widening academic achievement gap. While it is impossible to replace in-person classroom learning and social experiences, Y staff were committed to ensuring children in our care are able to exercise their right to an education.
Our Old Colony Y family has always been the driving force behind the life-changing programs and services we provide every day, and the last few months have been the ultimate test of our Y’s ability to carry out our mission. As COVID-19 spread across the country and affected every part of our community, it presented unprecedented obstacles for our organization. In the face of these challenges, our staff were unflinching and our volunteers reinforced their commitment to our cause. During the course of just a few months, we redefined safety and found innovative ways to serve our community when it needed us most.

**MARCH, APRIL, MAY: PIVOTING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY**

On March 17, our traditional YMCA branches suspended operations per Governor Baker’s orders. One week later, our traditional child care programs were also asked to close.

**Essential in every sense of the word** | Despite statewide shutdowns of most industries, more than half our workforce continued to care for vulnerable kids and families every day through our residential and community-based social service programs. During a crisis, the most underserved people in our community are often affected disproportionately. Our staff continued to serve the community despite great personal risk. They are the living embodiment of our mission.

**Homelessness and Family Services** | Within our Family Services Branch, the Y is home to nearly 60 families experiencing homelessness – and in the community, we are providing support and resources to nearly 250 more. The pandemic exacerbated challenges related to education and food insecurity, but our staff were able to provide support for virtual learning and distributed tens of thousands of meals to the families who needed them most.

**Mental Health** | Our Mental Health Clinic began conducting telehealth visits in March, and delivered about 350 virtual sessions per month through the end of June, totaling nearly 1,500.

**Fighting Food Insecurity** | All our traditional branches pivoted from member activities to a mobilized effort to support our community. Each branch served as a donation drop-off site for food and essential items. Branches and social service programs worked in coordination with local school districts to distribute the grocery equivalent of nearly 5,000 meals every week since mid-March.

**Six Old Colony Y sites were chosen by Governor Baker and EEC to serve as emergency child care programs, where we served about 340 children each week.**

It was our privilege to serve the children of first responders, healthcare professionals, essential employees, and vulnerable populations from the end of March through the end of June.
JUNE, JULY: FOR A SAFER US

On June 29, our four traditional summer camps were able to open with limited capacity. One week later, our traditional branches and child care programs were able to resume operation.

The summer experience | Without the daily engagement of school, sports, and other youth activities, kids were left isolated and unable to cultivate the relationships they need to develop socially and emotionally. At the Y, we need to get back to the fundamentals of serving young people regardless of the program. Kids need to be kids again - and what better (and safer) place than the Y?

✓ This summer: 3,241 camper weeks | 47% receiving financial assistance
✓ 97% of parents rate our attention to health and safety as “good or great”

Education gap | The ripple effect created by a lack of classroom time and virtual learning inequities have widened already pervasive education gaps in our community. We are working with local school districts to continue providing targeted virtual summer learning programs like Power Scholars and Summer Leaders, which collectively serve nearly 200 children at risk of falling behind.

Child Care | After serving the children of frontline workers during the pandemic, our centers are now open to all families in need of care. Now more than ever, parents and caregivers need places like the Y to deliver safe, quality care as they return to work. Looking ahead, we are actively working with dozens of local school districts to provide the flexible, creative solutions to care families need as our communities head back to school in the fall.

✓ Since June 29th: 684 children enrolled | 65% receiving financial assistance

Branches reopen to members: For a Safer Us | After working with our local Boards of Health to develop safety plans for our staff and members, we officially reopened our branches on July 6th. Social distancing, masks, intense cleaning, and limited capacities throughout the facility have led to a safe, successful reactivation of member activities, programs, and classes.

✓ Since July 6th: 22,684 visits | 372 new members

Y Champions at Camp Avoda: Responding to a growing need | In light of limited capacities at camps throughout the region, the Y and other providers were in search of programming for children experiencing homelessness. In partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development, we opened the Y Champions camp with the full support of Brockton’s Mayor Sullivan on the grounds of Camp Avoda in Middleboro, which was generously offered to us this summer.
LOOKING AHEAD: SAME Y, NEW WAY
As we continue to slowly reopen, we’ll take the lessons learned from earlier this year to improve our already high standards of safety and care.

Education, food insecurity, mental health, homelessness, health and wellness. These are not new concerns, and the Y has been involved in finding solutions to these pervasive community issues for generations. The presence of COVID-19 simply changed the way we deliver the same services we always have. The crisis has also highlighted additional inequities in our systems that we can now more clearly address.

Against the backdrop of a nationwide outcry for racial equality, the Y must look inward to ensure we can be the best advocates for our staff and participants and live up to our promise as an institution that works for everyone. We will also work with community partners to find ways in which all these issues intersect and take concrete steps to break down complex barriers that exist for many people in our community.

The Y is in a unique position to do this work. Our organization is comprised of a dynamic group of passionate staff who are experts in a variety of converging fields, and a dedicated group of volunteers who are unafraid to push the boundaries of what it means to be a YMCA. For those reasons, we have an opportunity to come out of this crisis stronger than ever.

Look no further than the success of our Annual Campaign for evidence that the Y is in a position to thrive. Despite the toll COVID-19 took on our organization, we were able to raise a record-setting $2.47 million, which will be reinvested in our community and help us ensure Y services and resources are accessible and equitable for all.

We sincerely appreciate the ongoing support we receive every day from our Y family. We simply cannot do this work without the collective force of an entire community behind us. We thank each and every person who has stood with us through this difficult time, just as you have stood with us throughout our history.

Even during these trying times, the Y always seems to go above expectations.

I wanted to say thank you and everything the Y has done for me. I’m not really good with showing emotion or gratitude a lot but I hope to repay you guys for everything you’ve done soon in my life.

I was immediately reassured by the staff and by the process that the Plymouth branch put in place. Great job!

Just wanted to say thank you for a great experience this morning! It was obvious that a lot of hard work and planning went into the reopening and it is much appreciated!

I’ve been back to the Y four days now, and am so grateful for all the hard work your staff are doing.

I just got home from work and the kids are showing me the bag that you dropped off for us. Oh my God there’s so much food. I am so thankful and grateful to the Y.

I felt a sense of relief reading this email update from you all and knowing that Governor Baker chose well in asking the Y to lend a hand (for emergency child care).