

Just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you are a friend/member of the Metropolitan Chattanooga YMCA. If we didn't land in your inbox, please add info@ymcachattanooga.org to your address book. We want you to meet some of the people who have stories to tell!

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Greetings!

Their lives are changed by your YMCA. In their own words, here are two stories especially for you! Happy New Year!

Janet Dunn, CEO



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Teenagers in Suits for Model United Nations

Seventeen year-old Nick Lobo is the Secretary General of the United Nations...the high school version.

Most people don't know the YMCA of Metropolitan Chattanooga hosts an event called the Southeastern High School **Model United Nations** (SHSMUN). This year 563 teenagers dressed in suits for a three-day conference led by high school students.

"I'm a senior at Chattanooga School of the Arts and Sciences [CSAS] and was introduced to SHSMUN (he calls it 'shush-mun') when I was a freshman," Nick says. "I had no idea what it was, but a delegation was formed and then I was hooked! I knew that first year I wanted someday to be Secretary General and lead the conference."

What is Model UN, you may wonder? Nick tells us Model UN is an extracurricular activity where students become delegates for a country, like the actual United Nations.

"You have to represent the point of view of your country for current world issues that are debated at the conference. For example, if you represent Saudi Arabia, perhaps on economic issues, you must keep in mind it is a culture where women have no economic freedom and the opinions from that country will be one-sided, entirely from the men. You have to walk in their shoes.

"The greatest challenge, after discussing the issues in committee, is drafting resolutions that may be brought before the General Assembly for a vote of all nations. This requires research, debate and the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of global concepts."

"For me it has also been a chance to explore my interest in things like public policy, legal

issues or economics," Nick says. "This experience has me considering international relations or political science for college."

With a 3.9 grade point average, Nick is looking at Harvard and University of Chicago, when he graduates from CSAS at the end of this school year.

How does this prepare our youth for the future?

"Model UN is about bringing ideas to the table, working as a community, reaching compromise. All of these are useful for college students and in careers when it will be necessary to find compromise with incompatible opinions, or having to understand an opposing view when it is completely contrary to your own beliefs," Nick says. (He is wise beyond his years.)

"Thanks to the YMCA and Model UN, students have a huge opportunity for an experience that is truly unique," says Nick. "It's not for everyone, but it is for those who are passionate about debate, writing, public speaking, meeting different kinds of people and having a whole lot of fun. I've made some of the best friends I've ever had in high school!"

Ultimate New Year's Resolution

Devin Lowe was exhausted mentally and physically, and weighed 210 lbs. (5'3" tall) at the end of the summer of 2014.

"My multiple sclerosis left me struggling with extreme fatigue. Walking to the mailbox was tough," Devin says. "I needed a nap every day and couldn't stand for long periods of time."

She started going to the fitness center at the Cleveland YMCA.

"About the only thing I could do was ride the bike," she says. "Ten minutes the first time and a little more each day until I was up to an hour, five days a week. I lost 30 pounds! My goal is 75."

Devin was amazed at how she was feeling. With exercise the fatigue got better and she was inspired by her daughter, who has epilepsy.

"I wanted to show her that we don't have to be perfect, we just have to try. Near the end of that year I saw a poster in lobby of the YMCA for the *Ultimate New Year's Resolution* contest. I had to write an essay. I'm pretty much a lemon, physically, with so many things wrong with me! I was clear about not being able to stand, walk or run as part of the exercise. They picked me to be part of the group! My personal trainer worked hard to find things I could do when we met one day every week. Then I would work on those things the other four days."



Every Friday the group would meet to try new things like water aerobics, Zumba and spin class.

"Truthfully the whole thing was completely out of my comfort zone. I was afraid I would look silly or not be able to do some of the exercises," Devin admits. "I discovered that good things are found outside my comfort zone! I made new friends from this group and I learned how important it is to do strength training for a well-rounded work out."

When the program ended eight weeks later Devin had lost another 22 pounds and was surprised to be the winner of the women's team.

"The Y changed my life! I mastered my own fears about my physical limitations. I even started walking and running some now because this program gave me the confidence to try," Devin says.

She has lost a total of 60 pounds! Her message for others: "People will tell you all the things you can't do, even doctors. Find out what you can do. Just start, even if it's only 10 minutes the first day."

Watch for future newsletters and let us know what you think!

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