



BECKET-CHIMNEY CORNERS YMCA

Camps and Berkshire Outdoor Center

Strategic Plan

2010 - 2012

"Changing Lives for Good"

Mission

To put Judeo-Christian principles in to practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

Vision

We provide life-changing experiences in a safe, fun environment that build healthy spirit, mind and body based on the core values of caring, respect, responsibility and honesty.

Organizational Overview

In order to set clear direction and focus for the Becket-Chimney Corners YMCA (BCCYMCA) Camps and Berkshire Outdoor Center, the Board of Trustees, Staff, and Volunteers have established a three-year Strategic Plan. The plan builds upon our very rich history and traditions, and will help to guide the institution as it expands and improves the services offered to our campers, alumni and families.

Camp Becket for Boys was established in 1903, and has remained a leader in the field of resident camping. Henry and Ina Gibson, early directors at Camp Becket, helped to establish Chimney Corners Camp for Girls in 1931. The Gibsons ran Chimney Corners Camp for the first ten years, until the camp was purchased by Howard and Evelyn Smith, who operated Chimney Corners as a private camp until its acquisition by the YMCA in 1972. Since their founding, these camps have offered rustic four week resident camp programs that teach leadership and develop strong character in young people.

In 1966 the BCCYMCA established the International Camper Exchange Program (ICEP), sending teenagers to Partner YMCAs, to promote world understanding and an appreciation for other cultures. ICEP programs are currently offered in Australia, Chile, China, Peru, New Zealand, Sweden, Russia, Japan, and Vietnam. In addition, the following domestic travel and service programs have been added: Reaching, Educating, and Caring for Humanity (REACH), a cultural learning program with the Lakota Native Americans in South Dakota, Teen Leadership and Service (TLS), a biking program through New York and Vermont, and Yellowstone Adventure and Service (YAS), an environmental learning program out west. The scope of the Teen Leadership Programs sets BCCYMCA apart from other YMCAs in the USA.

The Berkshire Outdoor Center, serves an additional 11,000 participants each year. In 1991, when the Becket-Chimney Corners YMCA moved their administrative offices from Framingham to our site in Becket, a commitment was made to expand our services on a year-round basis. A business plan for the Berkshire Outdoor Center was completed in 2007, with a focus on increasing the number of leadership development programs, family camps, and retreats. In addition to the programs that are offered during the school year, the Berkshire Outdoor Center offers a Summer Day Camp Program for families in the local community. The Day Camp has been growing each year to meet a need for local families. In 2010 a Task Force was formulated to review the 2007 Business Plan and make specific recommendations for improving the financial viability and program strength in the Berkshire Outdoor Center.

While this plan outlines BCCYMCA's goals for the future, there are key focus areas based on history and recent successes that must be maintained and improved upon as programs and facilities are expanded. The following focus areas reflect the organizations core values and business practices that are the foundation for the enterprise's current and historic success. The focus areas are:

1. Tradition & Values
2. Summer Enrollment
3. Marketing and Brand Awareness
4. Environmental Sustainability
5. Healthy Lifestyles
6. Technology

The BCCYMCA has a passionate alumni base that has been very effective at promoting camp programs, and has financially supported the camps through our Annual Campaign and the recent \$4 million *Tradition and Vision Legacy Campaign*. Keeping our alumni connected to the camps, and communicating how programs and services support our YMCA Mission, has kept the community engaged and the programs relevant to the needs of society.

Included in this plan are five strategic goals, each with specific objectives, which will be the focus for future business planning and the foundation for decisions that impact the camps programs and services. Strategic objectives have been developed in the following areas:

1. Financial Resources
2. Programs
3. Staff and Volunteers
4. Facilities
5. Risk Management

Focus Areas

While the organization has been operating resident camp for over 100 years, and facilities and staff have changed over time, each generation of campers has left the various programs with a consistent set of values that are often referred to as the “Becket Way” or being a “Chimney Girl”. The balance between maintaining the core values for the organization, while simultaneously adapting to current trends, can be summarized in the following focus areas, and should be thoughtfully considered when setting institutional goals and objectives.

1. Tradition & Values – Out of more than 240 YMCA Resident Camps in the United States, BCCYMCA is one of only five camps that continue to offer a four-week rustic camp experience, with the small cabin group as the core program offering. This is the institutions niche, and what its reputation has been built upon. The Camp Becket Mottos, Chimney Corners Song and Sign, cabin chat, camp songs, Gibson Hall, the CCC Barn, and Moms’ and Dads’ Weekends are all examples of this tradition and history that help to define and differentiate the institution.
2. Summer Enrollment – Enrollment levels have a significant impact on how the organization is perceived in the marketplace. There is an expectation that our summer camps will be 100% full, with a waitlist each year. It is critical that the camps not over build our summer camp capacity, and leave an empty bed in the resident camp program. Agreeing upon an appropriate number of campers that is sustainable; then building and maintaining facilities, a staff structure, and operating budget that supports those campers, is critical to the long term stability and sustainability of the camps.

3. Marketing and Brand Awareness – To a large degree in the past, the success of the programs has relied upon positive word of mouth from our alumni, families, and friends. While positive testimonials, home-visits, and camper reunions have proven to be very effective tools for retaining campers, this localized form of marketing has resulted in a regionalized pool of campers. The vast majority of campers come from Boston, New York City, Connecticut, and New Jersey. With increased competition for summer programs, it is very important that more sophisticated web based and printed materials are developed, and that new regions to recruit campers are expanded. The Berkshire Outdoor Center brings thousands of school age children, families, and youth groups to the camp's facilities, and provides an excellent opportunity to cross-market for our summer and family camp programs. Our resident camp families should also be accessed to help expand our Berkshire Outdoor Center.
4. Environmental Sustainability – With a property of over 1,350 acres, including scenic Rudd and Smith Ponds, we are stewards of an incredible natural resource. As public awareness increases with regard to energy consumption and carbon footprints, implementing sustainable practices in operations should and will be expected. As facilities and infrastructure are developed, it is important to consider the environmental impact, and find ways to embrace sustainable technologies and the appropriate use of local resources.
5. Healthy Lifestyles - The YMCA was founded on the principle of helping people to develop a healthy mind, body, and spirit. With the current health trends in the USA towards childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles, BCCYMCA programs provide an excellent opportunity to offer children the chance to get off the couch, participate in an active lifestyle that isn't competitive, and develop healthy eating habits. Efforts should be made to incorporate healthy menus that include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and proteins. Local food suppliers should be used when possible.
6. Technology – Today's youth is connected electronically. They live in and communicate with one another through online communities. That is not to say summer programs will be video camps, rather the appropriate use of technology to recruit campers, communicate with current camper families and staff, and effectively engage our alumni and friends must be recognized.

Strategic Objectives

Bearing in mind these six focus areas, and the opportunities and threats that face the BCCYMCA, the following five strategic objectives and goals have been identified:

Objective One - Financial Resources: Strengthen the institutions financial resources by developing and maintaining financial plans and actions necessary to ensure the continued success and sustainability of the Becket-Chimney Corners YMCA.

Context

The BCCYMCA has a solid financial track record of balanced operating budgets, inclusive of debt service, annual capital projects, annual fundraising, and program income and expense. The 2010 Annual Operating Budget is \$6.8 million, and includes \$614,000 in debt service.

Between 2005 and 2007, expense for two large capital projects was incurred. The replacement of the Chimney Corners Dining Hall, which was lost to a fire in January of 2005, and the construction of a Wastewater Treatment Facility to meet Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) mandates for water and septic management. These two projects alone cost more than \$10 million.

During this time, the organization successfully completed the *Tradition and Vision – Legacy Campaign* to help support the construction of the CCC Dining Hall, Wastewater Treatment Facility, and camper cabins. The organization raised \$4 million through 600 donors. Contributed dollars fell short of the overall expense, and the BCCYMCA acquired two fixed rate low interest 20-year loans to cover the difference; the principal balance of these loans totaled \$6,266,541, as of December 31st, 2009.

The BCCYMCA Development Office coordinates an annual campaign to support financial assistance. In 2009, \$517,000 was raised for the annual campaign. The 2010 budget for the annual campaign is \$557,500.

Strategic Goals (2010 – 2012)

1. Focus on growing the endowment through new donations.
2. Enhance alumni connections.
3. Complete the foundation work for the next capital campaign.
4. Enhance Annual Giving .
5. Maintain financial viability and establish clear metrics and reporting systems.
6. Manage and reduce financial risks.

Objective Two - Programs: Develop and maintain programs to meet the needs of the community while respecting the traditions of the past.

Context

The BCCYMCA consists of four main program departments; Camp Becket for Boys, Chimney Corners Camp for Girls, Travel and Service Programs, and the Berkshire Outdoor Center.

Camp Becket offers two four-week resident camp sessions, each serving approximately 280 boys in the 2nd – 9th grades. During the second session a two-week starter program for campers in the 2nd or 3rd grade is offered. As part of the resident camp, specialty programs for Construction and Climbing Cabins that focus on specific skills are offered. For the past several years, campers in “Construction” Cabins have spent a portion of their program time building one of the new camper cabins. Aides and Service Corp are on-site teen leadership programs that are offered to campers finishing the 10th Grade.

Chimney Corners Camp offers a very similar structure, serving approximately 256 girls in the 2nd – 9th grades. In addition, it offers Riding Cabin as an additional specialty program option. Chimney Corners Camp offers the horse riding program in the summer and provides riding lessons as an optional activity.

The Travel and Service Program offers leadership programs to approximately 185 teens finishing the 9th – 11th grades. The REACH, TLS, and YAS programs are all 28 day programs. The ICEP Programs are generally 36 days, except for the Sweden/Russia Program that travels for 42 days. The major program emphasis is on service learning, cultural awareness, and leadership development.

The Berkshire Outdoor Center operates on both the Becket and Chimney Corners sites on the shoulder seasons before and after summer, and at the Chimney Corners site throughout the winter. Leadership and Educational Programs for school age children account for the majority of the guests served. The BCCYMCA also has one of the largest challenge course facilities in the Northeast, with high and low ropes

courses, an alpine tower, and an indoor climbing wall. The Berkshire Outdoor Center provides facilities and programs for Family Camps, conferences, and retreats.

The BCCYMCA has an excellent reputation for quality programs, with over a 75% return rate for resident campers. Maintaining strong enrollment and customer satisfaction requires careful planning and thoughtful additions to keep our programs relevant to current families.

The Berkshire Outdoor Center has potential to serve more guests, and has developed a business plan to increase the number of Leadership and Education programs during our slower spring and winter seasons.

Strategic Goals (2010 – 2012)

1. Maintain high quality program delivery.
2. Continue/expand healthy living programs.
3. Serve a global community.
4. Expand service learning programs.
5. Manage and reduce program risks.

Objective Three - Staff and Volunteers: Engage, develop and retain an energetic and enthusiastic group of staff and volunteers that is representative of a diverse community.

Context

The BCCYMCA has a very strong staff retention rate for both seasonal and year-round employees. While the camper population roughly matches the ethnic diversity for New England, our staffing falls short of this goal. There are approximately 300 seasonal employees and 32 year-round staff.

The volunteer structure for the organization consists of a Board of Trustees, with approximately 20 members, Dads' and Moms' Committees, each with 10-12 members, and an Alumni Association with roughly 20 committee members.

Strategic Goals (2010 – 2012)

1. Establish a Rewards and Recognition System.
2. Provide appropriate training to help exceed industry standards.
3. Provide appropriate planning and documentation to ensure smooth transitions for key staff and volunteer positions.
4. Manage and reduce staffing and volunteer risks.

Objective Four - Facilities: Continually care for and improve facilities to support programs and reflect “green” environmental stewardship as well as historic and rustic preservation.

Context

The BCCYMCA has over 140 structures on over 1,350 acres, including historical buildings such as the Brewster House (built in 1786), Gibson Hall, Moose Lodge, and the Camp Becket Library. There are 32 camper cabins in Chimney Corners Camp and 35 camper cabins at Camp Becket. Currently all the camper cabins are seasonal use only, in use from May 15th to October 15th. Four winterized guest lodges are located at Chimney Corners Camp, with a total capacity of 175 beds. There are no winterized guest facilities at Camp Becket.

The two largest structures are the Camp Becket and Chimney Corners Dining Halls. The Camp Becket Dining Hall was built in the 1969, is a seasonal building, and is sized to fit the current number of campers and staff in the boys' camp. The building lacks sufficient refrigeration and storage for the kitchen, and there are no bathrooms on the main level. The dining room area is too small to accommodate buffet style meals in the summer. Any significant upgrades to the CB Dining Hall would require major investment to bring the entire structure up to current building codes. The Chimney Corners Dining Hall was completed in time for the 2006 summer, and was built to accommodate all of the campers and staff in the girls' camp. The dining and kitchen facilities are excellent, and there is 18,000 sq. feet of unfinished space in the basement that is ready to be built into meeting and program space. The CCC Dining Hall is underutilized during winter seasons, as there is seating for 500 guests in the dining hall, and only 175 winterized bed spaces.

With the exception of Ina Gibson Lodge, winterized guest facilities do not match the quality CCC Dining Hall and Program Facilities.

The annual operating budget does not contain sufficient funds to cover 100% of the necessary capital improvements, which has resulted in deferred maintenance and in some cases the loss of structures.

In addition to buildings, the dam and dike on Rudd Pond are in poor condition, and the MA Department of Dam Safety has required repairs to be completed by 2011.

The BCCYMCA constantly upgrades and repairs facilities, and has an opportunity to adopt sustainable building practices and preventative maintenance procedures to ensure the long-term care of its structures.

Strategic Goals (2010 – 2012)

1. Develop a master site plan to help preserve our historic site and enhance our mission through facilities and grounds that support programs.
2. Develop and finance a maintenance plan to stabilize the existing infrastructure.
3. Manage and reduce facility risks.

Objective Five - Risks & Changes: Anticipate and respond to risks and changes in the marketplace and the regulatory and natural environment while staying true to our values and maintaining institutional sustainability and relevance.

Context

The BCCYMCA has a responsibility to deliver safe programs year-round. Statistically the two areas with the greatest risks are aquatics programs and transportation. Policies and procedures are reviewed annually to ensure that American Camping Association (ACA) Standards are being met, along with all State and Federal regulatory requirements. During the times that the camps are operating “In Loco Parentis”, or in place of a parent, more responsibility for the campers we serve is being assumed.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations regarding septic and water management led to the construction of a Wastewater Treatment Facility for the camps. The Massachusetts Department of Dam Safety has also inspected the Rudd Pond Dam and Dyke, and significant repairs are required by 2010.

Year-round schooling would have a dramatic impact on our summer programs. This year a pilot year-round school was started in the Boston area. If year-round schooling were to become established in New England, the organization would need to be restructured.

Strategic Goals (2010 – 2012)

1. Identify and manage risks related to camp enrollment.
2. Maintain Federal, State, and Local Regulatory Compliance.
3. Identify and Manage risks related to transportation.
4. Plan and mitigate risks related to natural disasters, accidents, and injuries as they relate to our YMCA.
5. Review and analyze insurable risks.

Decision Mapping

Becket-Chimney Corners YMCA is a chartered YMCA, with a Board of Trustees, committees, and a professional staff. These groups need to work collaboratively to implement the strategic plan, and have clearly defined roles in the decision making process. The Board of Trustees is responsible for guiding the Mission and Financial viability for the institution. The following standing committees are defined in Becket-Chimney Corners YMCA Charter; Governance, Finance, Development, and Audit. In addition to these standing committees, the Board of Trustees can establish Task Forces to work on specific issues for a defined period of time. In extreme circumstances, such as the recent Chimney Corners Dining Hall fire, the Governance Committee has limited delegated authority to make institutional decisions without requiring the full BOT to meet. This authority allows the Governance Committee to make timely action to preserve and protect the Becket-Chimney Corners YMCA.

Staff

Strategic goals that have been assigned to staff should already have received Board of Trustee (BOT) approval. For example; when the BOT approves the annual budget, the staff is authorized to manage within the financial expectations that have been reviewed by the Finance Committee and approved by the BOT. Guidelines for staff decision making include:

1. Physical assets valued less than \$25,000 can be bought/sold/ or disposed of without specific BOT approval. Staffs are held accountable to the annual budget and the annual audit process.
2. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) manages the salaries and benefits for full-time and seasonal employees.
3. Directing the work of the staff.
4. Hire and discharge of staff members.
5. Staff updates should be distributed through CEO monthly update and/or written reports that are included in the BOT meeting packets posted online ten days prior to a scheduled meeting.
6. Construction drawings and cost estimates for Capital Projects that have been approved (and prioritized) by the BOT should be developed by staff and submitted to the BOT for final approval.
7. Funding sources must be identified and approved prior to starting a capital project.
8. Staff work that requires Committee recommendations or BOT approval should be assigned to a Committee or Task Group.

Board of Trustees

Strategic Goals that have been assigned to the BOT should have been worked on by Committees or Task Groups prior to a BOT meeting, with a specific written recommendation prepared in time to be included with the BOT packet for the meeting the topic has been assigned to. Guidelines for Board of Trustee decision making include:

1. Issues related to the financial viability of the institution.
2. Issues related to the Charter for the YMCA.
3. Employment of the Chief Executive Officer.
4. Creation of Task Forces and their scope of work.
5. Appointment of Committee members.
6. Recruitment of new BOT members.
7. Soliciting contributions in a fundraising campaign.
8. The sale/trade/or change of use of the physical property (land).
9. The sale/trade/ or exchange of any physical asset valued at more than \$25,000.
10. Approval to add a new staff position.
11. Approval of expenditures outside of the authorized budget.
12. Approval of the Annual Capital Project List.
13. Approval of the Annual Operating Budget.
14. Approval of Capital Projects.
15. Approval of the Annual Audit.
16. Any use of the Endowment Funds.
17. Strategic Planning Documents.

Committees

Committees are primarily tasked with doing the leg work for strategic goals between BOT meetings, and developing written recommendations for BOT approval. Recommendations can either be approved or sent back to committees for additional work. Guidelines for Committee decision making include:

1. Committees are not empowered to make institutional changes.
2. Committees should prepare written recommendations for BOT review and approval.
3. Committees have the responsibility of getting down to the nitty-gritty details on strategic goals that have not already been assigned by the BOT.
4. Committees should not be getting into the nitty-gritty details on strategic issues that have already been approved by the BOT and assigned to staff.
5. Draft recommendations from committees should be vetted through staff and Board of Advocates prior to submitting a final recommendation to the BOT.
6. Preparation of the Annual Operating Budget.
7. Review of the Annual Audit Process.

Task Forces

Task Groups operate under the same general guidelines as Committees, but are limited to a specific task and timeframe.