



# Partners With Youth A YMCA Story



*“Despite our social and financial stress, the Y helped me to feel normal.”*

## WHO I AM

My name is Frank Catalano. I’ve been a member of the Auburn Valley YMCA since 1993.

## MY SITUATION

When I was an child, eight or nine years old, my mother was a single mom with four kids. This was in the late 1960s, when it wasn’t really considered typical to be a single, divorced parent. The financial strain was great; I recall times when food for meals came from the USDA’s surplus food program. The money wasn’t really there for summer camp or other fun activities.

## ADD THE YMCA

One year, our mother found out the YMCA near where we lived had summer day camp. And they allowed kids to “earn” weeks of day camp by selling cans of an Almond Roca-like candy (I still recall the bright pink cans). So my two younger brothers, my older sister, and I went door to door, selling candy. Repeatedly.

We sold about 900 cans. That was enough to earn several weeks of Y day camp, a week at the overnight Camp Conrad, and a family membership. It was also enough to rid us of our taste for candy for, at least, a short while.

We never had what would be considered a direct scholarship from the YMCA, but this was pretty close. And it made for a great summer and year, including swim lessons, judo and many other Y activities over time. I even tried to give back a bit. At the age of twelve, I organized bus trips from the Santa Barbara Y to Disneyland, charging just over cost and giving all proceeds to the Y. With my

mother’s help, I even chartered the bus.

Despite our social and financial stress, the Y helped me to feel normal.

## THE RESULT

When I became a single father myself in the early 1990s, I joined the Y in Auburn with my three-year old son. I wanted him to have the additional support and activities that I had, and Michael did – from karate lessons to swim lessons to day camp. He even helped out as an assistant to counselors one summer during day camp, and is now a sophomore at the University of Washington.

Today, I’m a marketing executive for Pearson Education, an educational publishing and testing company. I still belong to the Y, now more for fitness than family reasons. But without the Y, I expect my childhood would not have been as happy, nor my outlook as positive. It’s why I support Partners with Youth.

**PLEASE SUPPORT PARTNERS WITH YOUTH**