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## MOTHER AND SON'S KIDNEY TRANSPLANT STORY

*NJ Sharing Network*

On March 1, 2023, the life of Carlos Vasquez, 38, of Elizabeth, NJ, was saved thanks to a successful kidney transplant surgery performed at Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center. Carlos' kidney donor hero was his mother, Daisy Vasquez, 59, of Elizabeth, NJ, who made the selfless decision to donate one of her kidneys to save the life of her son. Their incredible journey not only brought hope to their family but also ignited their passion to raise awareness and support the efforts of NJ Sharing Network, the non-profit organization responsible for the recovery of donated organs and tissue for transplant in the Garden State.

Today, Carlos struggles to keep his emotions in check when he thinks about the decision his mother made in donating one of her kidneys to him.

"I think it is impossible for anyone to fully realize how much your mom loves you. My mom has always been there for me, and she never hesitated for a second to help me when I needed it most. I am alive and feeling better and stronger each day thanks to her," said Carlos.

Daisy does her best to downplay her caring decision to donate her kidney to Carlos.

"I would assume that every parent would do what I did without hesitation to help their child. When we see our children sick, we want to do anything we can to take their pain away. I have said to Carlos, 'If I could give you my heart, I would,'" said Daisy.

### THE JOURNEY TO TRANSPLANT

Six years ago, Carlos' life took a sudden turn when he began experiencing debilitating headaches and severe leg swelling. He was later diagnosed with Wegener's vasculitis, a rare autoimmune condition that attacked his kidneys, ultimately leading to renal failure. Dialysis became a daily necessity for Carlos.

"I was worried that I would have to live my whole life on a machine," said Carlos.

Hope was rekindled when effective treatments improved Carlos' kidney health, allowing him to discontinue dialysis. For five years, Carlos remained vigilant about his health, but in 2022, a steep decline in kidney function left him with a grim 97% kidney failure diagnosis.

With hope dwindling, Daisy made the courageous decision to undergo rigorous testing for kidney donation. The results showed that Daisy and Carlos were a strong match for transplant and surgery was scheduled for March 1, 2023.

"I was very nervous, but I knew I had God on my side and that my mom was right there with me. That gave me strength," said Carlos.

The transplant surgery was a success and both Carlos and Daisy have recovered well and are living life to its fullest.

"I feel like I now have a second lease on life, and I feel like I am getting back to my old self again," said Carlos.

Daisy is also proud to report that she is feeling healthier than ever.

"I feel like I am in my prime now, and it feels like the surgery never



(above) Carlos and Daisy Vasquez

Courtesy photo

happened," said Daisy. "I run and walk at least 3-5 miles each day, and my doctors are delighted with my quick recovery."

### GIVING BACK

The Vasquez family's journey is not just a story of triumph over adversity; it's also a story of advocacy for organ and tissue donation. Daisy is a volunteer for NJ Sharing Network and is focused on dispelling myths and misinformation and organ and tissue donation, especially within the Hispanic community.

"Most people are not aware that you can donate a kidney or a part of your liver while you are alive," said Daisy. "But, more importantly, I encourage everyone to check the box to register as organ and tissue donors to give the gift of life after you pass away. I can only donate one kidney while I am alive, but I am happy to donate my organs and tissue to help others when my life is over."

To learn more, get involved, and join the National Donate Life Registry as an organ and tissue donor, visit [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

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# INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN TALK

Retired Policemen and Firemen's Association, Local 3

New Jersey State Police Detective Daniel Rafanan gave a 45-minute presentation on Internet Crimes Against Children, at the Retired Policemen and Firemen's Association, Local 3 meeting recently held at the Kenilworth VFW.

Detective Rafanan covered many of the issues with the Internet that lead to texting, bullying, depression, and suicide in our teens today. Detective Rafanan also covered sextortion which is an increasingly common online crime in which people are enticed into sending sexually explicit photos. Once the photos are sent, the receiver of the images threatens to share them online or with family or friends unless the victim sends money.

Detective Rafanan also explained what parents can do including, Establish rules and expectations for online behavior early on; Review your child's

social media account periodically, look at comments and photos; Explain consequences for inappropriate online behavior; Review your child's friends accounts as well; and Talk about what their friends are posting.

The Internet Crimes Against Children Unit is responsible for conducting investigations of offenders that utilize computers and computer technology for the purpose of exploiting children. The unit conducts proactive and reactive investigations into endangerment of children.

This was a powerful and educational presentation that all parents and teenagers should see and hear. If anyone would like more information on this program, you can email Retired Chief Grady at [rprflocal3@gmail.com](mailto:rprflocal3@gmail.com) for contact information.



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Organized by the American Museum of Natural History ([amnh.org](http://amnh.org)).

## IMAGINE SEEKS VOLUNTEERS FOR FEBRUARY TRAINING

A recent participant in Imagine's last volunteer facilitator training shared this about her experience: "The training was truly amazing and inspiring. I am so honored to have had the opportunity to participate in it." Another shared: "The Imagine Staff are amazing. I so appreciate all the knowledge they shared and the encouragement they gave to me and the other participants."

Participants in Imagine's training programs often describe the experience as "life-changing". In addition to story sharing and the opportunity to support one another, training participants gain knowledge and skills regarding Alan Wolfelt's Companioning Model for grief support that's practiced at Imagine. Participants often walk away with a new understanding of themselves, and a new capacity for supporting the people in their lives. They bring this understanding to their role as facilitators in Imagine's peer support

group program where children, youth, young adults and adults come together to share their grief experiences and receive and give support.

Imagine's volunteer facilitators come from all walks of life and no special background is required other than a willingness to listen, a heart inclined to serve, and the ability to be with children and adults in grief without trying to fix, solve or give advice. No prior experience is necessary. Volunteers must be 18 years or older. Bilingual (Spanish speaking) volunteers are needed as well. Volunteers serve as companions and loving listeners for those who are grieving and help create a space where participants can share tears and embrace the joys of life.

If you'd like to join us for Imagine's next facilitator training, it will be held Saturday, Feb. 17th through Monday, February 19th from 9 am-5 pm each day at Imagine's Newark Center at 570 Broad Street in Newark, and we ask that our new

volunteers attend the entire training. Our new Newark center is located downtown in the Chase building with parking available directly behind the building. It's also close to public transportation. We're hoping those completing the training will be able to facilitate groups held every other week at our Newark center. We have so many children and families currently in need of support that we're planning to launch a new Night of Support in Newark. We're also looking for a few new facilitators for our Mountainside location.

If you're interested in making a difference in the lives of grieving families and would like to participate in this transformative training experience, please visit Imagine's website at [imaginejnj.org](http://imaginejnj.org) or scan the bar code below to let us know of your interest. Please reach out to Imagine's Program Supervisor, Abigail Preece, LPC at [abigail@imaginejnj.org](mailto:abigail@imaginejnj.org) with any questions.

Imagine is a 501c3 nonprofit that offers free year-round grief support groups for children ages 3-18 and young adults 19-30 who are coping with a loss due to death. Concurrently, support groups are available for the parents and guardians of the children in the groups and offered in English and Spanish. Imagine also offers grief and loss education and training to the community. For more information please contact Imagine at 908-264-3100 or [info@imaginejnj.org](mailto:info@imaginejnj.org).



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## SCOUTS HAD FUN AT HOLIDAY PARTY

The snowballs were flying inside St. Genevieve's Church hall on Wednesday, December 20, when Boy Scout Troop 23 and Cub Scout Pack 23 held their Christmas holiday party. Dozens of fake snowballs flew back and forth as two teams tried to capture their opponents' flag. Later, the Scouts ran a relay race in which they had to spin three times around a 2-foot long candy cane. The party ended with two holiday-decorated cakes.

The Scouting program instills character, good citizenship and physical fitness in youth through outdoor activities such as campouts and hikes, involvement in community activities, and just plain FUN! If you have a son or daughter, nephew or niece, grandson or granddaughter, or neighbor who is anywhere between a Kindergartener and a high school senior, please suggest they consider getting in on the fun of Scouting.

New members (regardless of religious affiliation) are welcome at any time, all year round. For more details, please contact Dan Bernier, Scoutmaster, at (908) 451-1948 or webfootroop@gmail.com.



(above) The snowballs were flying in a game of Capture the Flag during the holiday party for Boy Scout Troop 23 and Cub Scout Pack 23 at St. Genevieve's Church hall.



(above) Scouts ran a relay race where they had to spin three times around a giant candy cane.

## CUB SCOUTS HOLIDAY LIGHTS SPECTACULAR

On Friday evening, December 29, Cub Scouts from Pack 23 and their family members visited the annual Holiday Lights Spectacular at Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange. The Scouts got to see a variety of animals while strolling through the zoo, which was lit up with hundreds of thousands of lights. At the end of the night, the Cubs were treated to a tailgating party of hot chocolate and cookies.

Cub Scout Pack 23 provides activities and

training for boys and girls in Kindergarten through the fifth grade. New members are welcome at any time, all year round. Cub Scout den meetings are held on most Wednesday evenings in the St. Genevieve's Church hall, 200 Monmouth Road, Elizabeth, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

For more details, please contact Dan Bernier, Cubmaster, at (908) 451-1948 or webfootroop@gmail.com.



(above) Cub Scouts from Pack 23 of Elizabeth posed for a group photo during the Holiday Lights Spectacular at Turtle Back Zoo.

Courtesy photos

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## Monday February 5, 2024

7:00 PM LIVE @ The Nazareth Center, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 1571 South Martine Ave, Scotch Plains. Please register before 1/29/24. More details available at [www.ihmparish.net/alpha](http://www.ihmparish.net/alpha)

# ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S AWARDS IN ARTS EDUCATION

## Elizabeth Public Schools

Twelve students from Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy competed in the Annual Governor's Awards in Arts Education, sponsored by the Speech and Theatre Association of New Jersey. This is a highly competitive, statewide competition that took place on the campus of Montclair State University on Saturday, January 6, 2024. Students competed in categories such as Dramatic Monologue, Comedic Monologue, Musical Theatre Solo, Scenes, and Shakespeare. Students were judged and received valuable

feedback from industry professionals. The following students earned special recognition for their efforts:

- 3rd place for SCENE
  - performing a scene from A Raisin in the Sun, directed by Erika Hicks
  - Actors: Angelina Benatar, Za'Niyah Shell, and Shamar Thomas
- 2nd Place for DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE
  - performing a monologue from A Raisin in the Sun
  - Actor: Shamar Thomas

- 2nd Place for BEST ACTRESS overall: Za'Niyah Shell
- 1st Place for BEST ACTOR overall and the Governor's Award for BEST ACTOR was awarded to Shamar Thomas.

The 2024 STANJ Governor's Award for Outstanding Teacher of Theatre was awarded to Sandra Toll, teacher of Theatre Arts at Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy, recognizing her years of dedicated service.



(above) Za'Niyah Shell 2nd Place for BEST ACTRESS overall

Courtesy photos



(above) Angelina Benatar, Za'Niyah Shell, and Shamar Thomas, Actors: 3rd place for SCENE - performing a scene from A Raisin in the Sun, directed by Erika Hicks



(above) Sandra Toll, teacher of Theatre Arts at Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy, received the 2024 STANJ Governor's Award for Outstanding Teacher of Theatre.



(above) 2024 STANJ Participants



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## HILARIOUS WHODUNIT COMING TO CDC THEATRE IN CRANFORD

The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940, an Agatha-Christie-meets-Clue parody, is full of twists, turns, red herrings and slapstick for audiences of all ages! John Bishop's 1987 comedy is a send-up of all the cliches and stereotypes from both musical theater and murder mysteries thrown together and shaken up for laughs.

The creative team responsible for a recent Broadway flop assemble for a backer's audition of their new show at the Westchester estate of a wealthy and eccentric theatre financier. However, the shadow of the team's last show hangs over the group-- Manhattan Holiday was ravaged by the "Stage Door Slasher," a mysterious killer who stabbed chorus girls. As the composer, lyricist, actors and director prepare their performance, and a blizzard cuts off any possible retreat, bodies start to drop in plain sight. It doesn't take long for everyone to figure out that one of them is The Stage Door Slasher and accusing fingers point in all directions. The bumbling police inspector, who snowshoes in to investigate, is hoping to flush out the killer from this group of suspects--but the killer has other plans. More than that, the threat of Nazi saboteurs lurks among them!

Will the Slasher be unmasked? Maybe, but not before the audience has been treated to a rollicking good time full of the author's biting, satiric and irreverent wit.

Performances are at CDC Theatre, 78 Winans Ave. in Cranford with shows on Fridays and Saturdays, February 9-24 at 8pm and on Sunday, February 18 at 2pm. For the best ticket selection and price, visit [cdctheatre.org](http://cdctheatre.org).

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Made possible by funds from the Union County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

## CELEBRATING A BLUE RIBBON YEAR OF SERVICE

Elizabeth Snyder-Continental Chapter DAR

A National Blue Ribbon Achievement Award is one of the honors being celebrated by Elizabeth Snyder-Continental Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) at their 128th Anniversary Luncheon held in Warren on January 27, 2023. The chapter was recognized for outstanding support of the DAR's goals of historic preservation, patriotism, and education.

"We are very honored to receive this award," said Regent Ashley Salsano. "Our members are a dedicated group of women who work hard to honor their heritage by serving our local community and our nation."

Chapter members recorded 1,800 volunteer hours in 2023. Service projects included supporting youth programs and promoting the study of American history; honoring veterans; greeting new citizens at naturalization ceremonies; organizing public genealogy

workshops; preserving local historic sites; and assisting in the creation of a New Jersey Revolutionary War soldier database.

The chapter was also honored for their work with the Children of the American Revolution, American Indians, and Membership committees. Barbara Pollison-Beck, Ruth Ryno, and Holly Dunbar each received committee awards. Ashley Ryno was recognized for serving as a state page and was named Chapter Outstanding Junior.

The DAR is a service organization open to women descended from an individual who aided the cause of independence during the American Revolution. Based in Green Brook, Elizabeth Snyder-Continental Chapter serves areas of Somerset, Middlesex and Union counties. Prospective members are welcome to attend monthly meetings and events as the DAR prepares to celebrate America's 250th. Contact the chapter at [ESCchapterDAR@gmail.com](mailto:ESCchapterDAR@gmail.com).



(above) DAR Chapter members volunteered 1,800 hours of community service in 2023.

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# FEBRUARY PROGRAMS AT ELMORA BRANCH LIBRARY

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Monday - Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 7:45 p.m. • Friday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:45 p.m. • Saturday: 9:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. • Sunday: Closed  
The library will be closed on February 19th

## Predict the Oscar Award Contest

Thursday, February 1 through  
Thursday, February 29

Attention all movie lovers! Get ready to put your prediction skills to the test as Elmora Branch Library is bringing you the ultimate challenge - "Predict the Oscar 2024 winner" contest. Don't miss out on the thrilling challenge that awaits you at Elmora Branch Library!

## Toddlers World

Friday, February 2, 9, 16, & 23 at 11 am

An hour of fun songs to sing, music, and playtime.

## Adult Chess Club

Friday, February 2, 9, 16, & 23 at 12:30 pm

Join the Adult Chess Club every Friday at 12:30pm! Regardless of your skill level, beginners are welcome to participate. We hope to see you there.

## Matinee Movie

Friday, February 2, 9, 16, 23 at 2 pm

At 2pm, don't miss out on the fun! Join us for a Matinee Movie at Elmora Branch Library. It's going to be a great time. This month's showtime is "Sound on Freedom" on 2/2, "Oppenheimer on 2/9, "Killers of the Moon Flower" on 2/16, & "The Holdover" on 2/23.

## Art Workshop: Black History Month

Saturday, February 3 & 17 at 12 pm

Let's delve into the world of art and take inspiration from Black artists. Come and join us on February 3rd, and let's create stunning images similar to Alma Thomas. Also, on February 17th, let's honor Lois Mailou Jones by creating hair portraits inspired by her paintings.

## Zumba Gold

Monday, February 5 & 12 and

Thursday, February 8 at 9 am

Add fitness into your day through dance with us! Call 908-353-4820 to reserve your spot, however, walk-ins are welcome!

## Mahjong

Monday, February 5, 12, & 26  
from 1:00 - 4 PM

Everyone who loves Mahjong is welcome to come & play at the library. Bring friends or come alone & find new partners. We'll provide the space for open play. A minimum of 4 players are required to play the game.

Ages: 18 & up

## Junior Chess Club

Monday, February 5, 12, & 26 at 4 pm

Join our Chess Club for Kids - Monday at 4pm.

Beginners are welcome!

## Grown up Coloring

Tuesday, February 6, 20, & 27 at 1 am

Drop by for a relaxing coloring session! Experience the calming effects while enjoying the company of others.

## Tai Chi & Qi Gong

Wednesday, February 7, 14, 21, & 28  
at 9am & 5pm

Join Pete every Wednesday for Tai Chi, a gentle Chinese martial art that combines slow, flowing movements with deep breathing. Experience the refreshing benefits of mindfulness! Call (908) 353-4820 or reserve your spot on our website at [elizpl.org](http://elizpl.org/).

## Lil' Bookworms

Wednesday, February 7 at 5 pm

Kids will share their love of reading, learn to talk about the books they're reading, and be motivated to read. Ages: 5-8

## Bubbles aRe Us

Saturday, February 10 at 1 pm

Located on 640 3rd Avenue, Elizabeth, NJ Join Ms. Martha for songs, stories, crafts, and oh-so-much fun! This storytime will feature stories in English and Spanish for the whole family.

## Valentine Balloon Art

Saturday, February 10 at 3 pm

Bring your family to Elmora for a special

balloon program. Children can take home balloons.

## Stitch & Chat

Tuesday, February 13 at 10AM and  
Wednesday, February 14 at 6PM

Come to Elmora to mend your clothing. Bring the article you need help with and assistance will be provided.

## Adult Spanish Book Club

Thursday, February 22 at 2PM

Come and join Lucrecia as she hosts a monthly book discussion for Spanish-speaking adults!

## Drawing for Kids

Tuesday, February 23 at 3 pm

Come and join us for a delightful storytime where you will get to learn how to draw various animals!

## Coloring for Kids

Saturday, February 24 at 11 am

Take a break and unwind by coloring at the Elmora Branch for an hour!

## All Age Lego Hour

Saturday, February 24 at 3 pm

It's Lego Hour at Elmora on Saturday @3pm. Come build an enormous tower or make a race car; the imagination is limitless!



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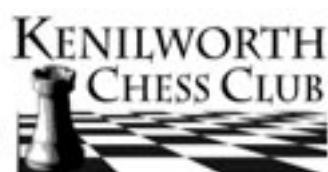
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**[www.kenilworthchessclub.org](http://www.kenilworthchessclub.org)**

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<b>Florham Park Press</b> NJ Qty: 5,500 Zip: 07932	<b>Garwood Times</b> NJ Qty: 2,500 Zip: 07027	<b>Green Brook</b> NJ Gazette Qty: 3,000 Zip: 08812	<b>BUSINESS • LIFE</b> <b>KENILWORTH</b> NJ Qty: 3,500 Zip: 07033	<b>NJ LIFE in LINDEN</b> Qty: 17,900 Zip: 07036	<b>Long Hill LEADER</b> NJ Qty: 3,500 Zips: 07933, 07946, 07980
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1 Unit (Business card)	3.25" x 2"	\$60	\$150	\$250	\$350	\$400	\$450	\$500	\$550	\$600
2 Units	6.5" x 2" or 3.25" x 4"	\$100	\$250	\$400	\$500	\$600	\$700	\$800	\$900	\$1000
4 Units	3.25" x 8" or 6.5" x 4"	\$180	\$450	\$700	\$900	\$1100	\$1300	\$1500	\$1700	\$1900
6 Units	6.5" x 6.25" or 10" x 4"	\$240	\$600	\$900	\$1200	\$1400	\$1600	\$1800	\$2000	\$2200
9 HALF PAGE	6.5" x 9" or 10" x 7"	\$320	\$800	\$1000	\$1300	\$1600	\$1900	\$2200	\$2400	\$2700
12 Units	10" x 8"	\$360	\$900	\$1200	\$1500	\$1800	\$2100	\$2400	\$2700	\$3000
18 FULL PAGE	10" x 14"	\$400	\$1000	\$1400	\$1800	\$2200	\$2500	\$2800	\$3000	\$3400
2-PAGE SPREAD	21" x 14"	\$700								
BACK PAGE	10" x 14"	\$500								
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## FREE WELL-BEING INITIATIVE FOR CANCER SURVIVORS

The Gateway Family YMCA recently celebrated a heartwarming graduation ceremony for members of the LiveSTRONG® at the YMCA program, held at The Gateway Family YMCA – Wellness Center Branch. LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA is a research-based physical activity and well-being initiative that helps people affected by cancer reach their holistic health goals.

The LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA program is offered free to cancer survivors to provide support and assistance in a small community format. Registration is available for the next program session, held at The Gateway Family YMCA - Wellness Center Branch, 1000 Galloping Hill Rd, Union. The program will be held March 5th – May 23rd, on Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-2:00 p.m. Interested participants can contact Jodi Pelano at 908-349-9622 or [livestrong@tgfymca.org](mailto:livestrong@tgfymca.org) to register or to express interest in a future program.

“LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA offers those who have been diagnosed with cancer the support they need to build both physical and emotional strength,” stated Melynda A. Disla, President/CEO, The Gateway Family YMCA. “With a mission centered on equity for all, we strive to be a leading voice on health and well-being for our community, providing resources and guidance so that all people, no matter what their circumstance, can achieve their goals and feel supported in spirit, mind and body.” Through YMCA Financial Assistance supported by the Annual Campaign and grant funding,

there is no fee for individuals to attend LiveSTRONG® at the YMCA.

“Research shows exercise is the simplest way for cancer survivors to reduce fatigue, improve their mood and bounce back from the debilitating effects of cancer treatment more quickly,” said Dr. Ruth Rechis, LIVESTRONG® Foundation Vice President of Programs. “But there weren’t enough programs to help people affected by cancer reach their health and well-being goals, so LIVESTRONG® and the Y joined forces to create LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA. The Y is the perfect collaborator because of its national reach, commitment to meeting the needs of all community members and history of program innovation in support of health and wellness.”

As part of LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA, the Y engages cancer survivors through an approach that focuses on the whole person. Participants work with specially trained staff to build muscle mass and strength, increase flexibility and endurance, and improve functional ability. In addition to physical benefits, the program also focuses on the emotional well-being of survivors by providing a supportive community environment where people affected by cancer can connect during treatment and beyond.

For more information on The Gateway Family YMCA, visit [tgfymca.org](http://tgfymca.org).

For more information on LIVESTRONG® at the YMCA, contact Jodi Pelano, Wellness Center Branch Executive Director at 908-349-9622 or [livestrong@tgfymca.org](mailto:livestrong@tgfymca.org).



(above) The Gateway Family YMCA celebrated LIVESTRONG® AT THE YMCA Graduation



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