

## KATHLEEN WALSH

Kathleen Walsh can best be described as the quintessential servant leader — someone who is always striving to make the world a better place.

For 30 years, she has been fiercely dedicated to the mission of the YMCA and a tireless advocate of its three pillars — healthy living, youth development and social responsibility.

Kathleen's devotion to the YMCA dates back to her childhood growing up in Danvers, when she would go door to door selling candy bars to raise money to attend the Y summer camp.

Her parents made it clear: If you want something, you must earn it.

It's a philosophy that has guided Kathleen all through her life and career.

Kathleen went to work for the Y immediately after earning her graduate degree in sports administration from Northeastern University

She started out as branch manager of the old Ipswich YMCA, where she would not only supervise the staff, but teach classes, take out the trash and shovel the snow.

She eventually transferred to the YMCA of Greater Boston, serving as executive director and group vice president of the Reading and Dorchester YMCAs for seven years.

In 2012, she joined the YMCA of Metro North, first as its vice president of development, then as its chief operating officer. In 2019, she was promoted to the role of president and CEO.

One year into the position, she was forced to navigate the organization through the myriad of challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, Kathleen oversees a staff that balloons to close to 900 in the summer, spanning eight health and wellness centers and child care facilities in Lynn, Peabody, Melrose, Saugus and Stoneham. Collectively, they serve 60,000 people of all ages a year.

Under Kathleen's leadership, the YMCA of Metro North advances its charitable mission by providing more than \$1.2 million in financial assistance a year. The funding supports access to healthy living and youth programs for community members, especially activities related to camp and child care.

A champion of health equity, Kathleen is passionate about helping every person reach their full potential. An athlete and avid runner herself — she has completed more than 60 marathons — Kathleen believes healthy living, fitness and exercise are essential for physical and emotional well-being.

One of her proudest accomplishments has been the development of the new \$31 million Demakes Family YMCA in Lynn, which has provided a state-of-the-art facility in the heart of one of the city's most diverse and evolving areas.

Kathleen is also laser-focused on the health, growth and development of her employees, says Sandy St. Louis, vice president of communications and marketing for the YMCA of Metro North, who nominated her for the Diamond Award.

Sandy says Kathleen regularly challenges her team to be innovative in their approach to solutions and lovingly encourages everyone to be their best selves.

“Kathleen acts with social responsibility in mind, and with generosity, caring and compassion,” Sandy St. Louis says. “She is always giving to others and ensuring that people can access the Y regardless of their financial, physical or other challenges.”

Kathleen, who now lives in Lynnfield, is the mother of three young adults — daughters Johanna and Cynthia and son Francis. She also makes time in her life to volunteer on a number of boards and organizations.

She is vice chair of the Northeastern Massachusetts Chapter of the American Red Cross and former chair of the Lynn Education District Partnership.

She is a board member and former chair of the state Department of Children and Family Services, Malden, and on the board of the Massachusetts Alliance of YMCAs.

She is also a corporator of North Shore Bank and serves on The Chamber’s Thrive Advisory Council. She was recently selected — along with Samanda Morales — to participate in LEADS North Shore, the economic and leadership development program that seeks to tackle issues facing the region.

Kathleen strives for equality in everything she does — whether it be building her team or serving the Y’s members and the general community.

“I want to level the playing field for everyone,” she says.