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## **UNIONTOWN AREA YMCA NAMED JANUARY 'FACE' FOR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY HEALTH**

**Uniontown, PA** – When many people think of a YMCA, what comes to mind are exercise classes, fitness training, or swimming lessons. The Uniontown Area YMCA offers all of that and more. The facility's commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of its community runs deep, earning it the Fayette Faces and Places designation for January.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on every gym and fitness facility, even requiring them to shut down for a period of time in 2020, Uniontown Area YMCA CEO Steve Redrup said the South Mount Vernon Avenue center has fared remarkably well during a difficult period. He said some of the facility's most popular offerings, including group exercise classes, Silver Sneakers classes and water fitness classes have maintained their attendance levels well.

"The numbers have been really strong, even during COVID," he said.

"Our senior classes are pretty popular. We have a huge senior base," Associate Executive Director Pam George said. "We do have cycling classes that are popular and we have a barbell/weightlifting class that's very active."

Dozens of exercise and fitness classes are available at the Uniontown Area YMCA, but beyond those, it has branched out to offer childcare, host holiday events and partner with outside organizations whose aim is to improve the lifestyles of local residents.

For instance, Redrup was in attendance at the Blue Zones Project community forums in October. He said he already was familiar with the project, thanks to his previous job.

"When I was in my previous position in Corry, they became a Blue Zones community while I was there," he said. "That's why they kind of pulled me into that."

Redrup said he was in the unique position of having gone from a Blue Zones community into one that was poised to be another.

"It's kind of interesting that it worked out that way," he said. "We were excited, and it is a natural partnership with the YMCA. Concentrating on healthy living, enhancing the lifestyles of people in the community – that's exactly what we want to do at the Y. So, it's a great partnership."

More recently, the Uniontown YMCA hosted the Health Equity Tour, sponsored by YMCAs of Harrisburg. The tour was making its way to YMCAs throughout Pennsylvania, setting up community health fair-like events that included various health- and fitness-related businesses and vendors.

“It was great to host them,” Redrup said. “We had a pretty good turnout that day. I think they had over 20-some agencies there, and there was a podcast as well.”

The Uniontown Area YMCA also features a childcare program that strives to “provide a safe, fun place parents can take their kids,” Redrup said. And the facility is thinking about parents, too, offering Parents Night Out events during which time parents can drop off kids outside childcare hours and have free time for a date night or other child-free activity.

Last summer, the facility hosted Hoops and Scoops, a foul-shooting contest that also provided participants with free ice cream, and is planning to host the event again this year. This winter, the YMCA had about 65 kids in attendance at its Breakfast with Santa event.

“We’re planning to have some type of Easter event, too,” Redrup said. “We just don’t know what that looks like yet.”

George noted that the YMCA is an affordable option for many.

“We have funded classes at no cost for seniors. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Agency on Aging has grant-funded senior fitness classes,” she said. “Those are open to the community at no charge.”

George said the facility offers income-based scholarships for the underprivileged, and for those who don’t want to invest in a full membership, there is an alternative available.

“We offer punch cards for people that don’t want to buy a membership. They can take a few classes here and there,” she said.

Though the Uniontown Area YMCA is heavily involved in the community and provides a wide selection of exercise and fitness options to its members, Redrup said the facility always is looking to do more, especially in the wake of a pandemic that caused membership numbers to decline a bit.

Redrup said membership is on a steady upswing, “it’s just not at the rate that we would like.” He said older adults make up a significant percentage of the membership, and only about 65% of them have returned so far post-pandemic.

One way the YMCA is hoping to change that is through its Christian Emphasis program. Redrup said the facility will work with local churches this spring to reach out to the community even more.

Another key to making it through tough times, he said, is being able to go with the flow.

“We’ve got to be just super flexible with all of our events,” he said.

To learn more about the Uniontown Area YMCA, visit [www.uniontownymca.org](http://www.uniontownymca.org).

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