

# COMMUNITY HEALTH

July 2013

The YMCA of Martha's Vineyard is a non-profit, cause-driven, charitable organization that relies on the generous support of friends like you.

## WE'RE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## SO OUR TEENS CAN BE BETTER PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE

### Keeping teens ENGAGED

So they have the tools they need to succeed.

Martha's Vineyard Regional High School had 184. Martha's Vineyard Public Charter School, 12. Falmouth Academy, even more. High School graduations abounded in recent weeks and numerous Island teens were pushed from their nests into the worlds of college and work. Are they prepared for the leap? As parents, as citizens, and as Islanders, we hope so.

At the Y, we do more than hope. We act. With 500 teen members at the Y, we recognize the importance of providing the tools teens need to be successful in their future endeavors. We try to instill in them confidence, life skills, and a sense of community. We're very proud that roughly 70% of Island teens use the Y regularly.

### IT STARTS WITH CONFIDENCE

We know that teens face many challenges. Through the Alexandra Gagnon Teen Center (Alex's Place) and other programs at the Y, we strive to build an environment where every teen feels important and can gain skills and knowledge that reinforce their self-worth. More importantly, we aim to inspire teens and prepare them for adulthood, giving them the confidence and skills to live a healthy and active life.

Not only do we provide a safe and nurturing haven for teens where it's easy to make healthy choices and cultivate positive peer relationships, but we also help them navigate the media and teach them to make their own decisions about social norms. Two givens regarding Digital Technology are that it's not going to go away, and that it's an integral part of teens' lives. We're not going to wean them away from it – nor should we. Tony Lombardi, Director of Alex's Place explains, "As adults, we feel like we want to get them away from it, but it's what they are."

### BUILDING SKILLS

How do we prevent them from getting so wrapped up in social media, texting, and email that they lose sight of the real people on the other end? Tony offers a solution. "It's like a car," he says. "We teach them responsible use. We go where they are (digital technology) and walk them back to the humanity in it. The Y offers several programs that incorporate and even promote the newest technology, with the all-important human element. At Alex's Place, the educational opportunities are saturated in digital literacy, providing outlets that inspire teens to make positive choices in their everyday lives and equip them with workforce development tools that open doors for future endeavors.

**Digital Literacy** The Comcast Digital Connectors program focuses on digital literacy, enabling youth to hone technical competencies and grasp lifelong principles for educational advancement and workforce preparation.

**Musical Arts** Funded by Comcast, our cutting-edge technology and skilled mentors allow us to introduce teens to the art of recording, production, digitizing, and performing their original audio creations as a means to increase digital literacy, enhance artistic performance, and investigate the musical and digital arts as a career choice.

Not only do we teach them how, but we also encourage our teen participants to perform for others. Last December, our donors and supporters received a very special holiday gift – a CD of musical performances by Alex's Place teens. Each year, we schedule teens to give opening performances at our annual Stars & Stripes concert. You can show your support this year as Darby Patterson and Tessa Whitaker take the stage at this year's event on July 6th.

**Community Pavilion** In the truest sense of Island collaboration, the Y joined forces with the MVRHS Building Trades Class to build our new community pavilion. Lead by instructor Billy Seabourne, 25 students in grades 9 to 12 worked with eight Island trade businesses to construct the pavilion. The project provided the teen students with the opportunity to develop hands-on skills in building trades and project management, discover a sense of accomplishment by finishing a major project, and experience the delight of giving back and investing in their community.

**Health & Wellness** The Y provides many health and wellness opportunities for our Island teens. We partner with the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School to provide a home for the Island's first ever competitive swim team and use of our facility for the physical education program. We also offer training for high school athletes through our Health & Wellness department.

### GIVING BACK

Besides the Pavilion project, Y teens are exposed to many avenues of giving back to their communities. Teens in our HumaniTeen and Digital Connectors programs have volunteered nearly 3,000 hours of service at community-based organizations, senior centers, churches and local schools, providing outreach and digital education to our Island community, primarily seniors and those with special needs.

Learn more about what our teens are doing at [www.alexspace.net](http://www.alexspace.net).

## SHARING OUR STORIES

Being able to know how to build such a building is very valuable. Also, we can all take pride in building that for our community – it's very cool knowing that the community and its youth can utilize something that I helped make. I feel an overall sense of accomplishment and selfless giving to the community for something that any and everyone can use!

– Benjamin Lukowitz, MVRHS junior

A few members of the Community Pavilion Crew gather for a photo during the last days of class



## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

- 7/5: Open Stage – all ages  
8pm @ Alex's Place, \$5
- 7/6: 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Star's + Stripes Festival, featuring:  
Walk the Moon  
St. Lucia  
Haerts  
Magic Man  
7:30pm @ Flatbread's; 21+ event  
Tickets at [ticketsmv.com](http://ticketsmv.com)
- 7/11: Live Comedy Improv  
8pm, @Alex's Place  
Adults \$15, Teens \$11
- 7/12: Open Stage – all ages  
8pm @ Alex's Place, \$5
- 7/13: Erich & The Luenatics  
9pm, @Alex's Place, \$10
- 7/15-19: The Write Stuff – Poetry Workshops for Teens, 9am-1pm
- 7/18: Live Comedy Improv  
8pm, @ Alex's Place  
Adults \$15, Teens \$11
- 7/19: Open Stage – all ages  
8pm @ Alex's Place, \$5
- 7/20: Jemima James & Friends  
9pm, @ Alex's Place, \$10
- 7/22-26: Basketball Clinic  
Session II, For ages 6-12 years
- 7/27: Philly D and Special Guests  
9pm, @ Alex's Place, \$10

View our program guide and calendar of events at [www.ymcamv.org](http://www.ymcamv.org)!

## WHAT DO OVER 700 TEENS DO AT THE Y ? FLOURISH.



YMCA OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
SWARTZ FAMILY FACILITY  
Home of Alex's Place

111R Edgartown Vineyard Haven Road, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568  
P 508.696.7171 F 508.696.6806 [www.ymcamv.org](http://www.ymcamv.org)

This edition of Community Health recognizes our teen program sponsor.



Alexandra MM Gagnon Foundation

COMCAST NBCUNIVERSAL

