

Faces of the YMCA

“The YMCA is a community where I can raise my child...”

Ro-z Wilkinson

Ro-z started coming to the YMCA when her son Jerome was 2 years old. Her first experience at the YMCA was at the Early Years Centre. Ro-z and Jerome attended the centre on a daily basis. Her experience in the Early Years centre was a very positive one. Jerome was having difficulty with his speech and she got support and encouragement from the staff. Early Years staff pointed out that, “I talked for my son and Mary Eleanor, told me to let him speak for himself.” Ro-z says staff in the Early Years centres “taught me to be a better parent – I now have a great bond with my son.” As a single mom Ro-z was looking for a place where she and her son could grow and be together. They found that at the YMCA.

Jerome is a very active 10-year old boy who participates in many YMCA programs, such as camps, swimming lessons and leader corps. Ro-z says, “as an only child, he gets to experience being with other children. There are lots of good role models at the YMCA for Jerome. He gets a male role model that is not available to him at home.”

Attending the centre six times a week and often twice a day, Ro-z soon became an enthusiastic volunteer. She was recognized for her volunteer contribution at the Early Childhood Development Centre Awards of Excellence.

The YMCA has changed Ro-z’s parenting style, made her a better parent and has given her confidence in her parenting. She wouldn’t be the parent she is today without it. “Because of the Y, I now have a great bond with my son,” she says. “I am very proud of Jerome. The YMCA has helped me raise him and he is a great kid.”

The help Ro-z gets from staff at the Y has made a huge difference to their lives, Ro-z says. Her son is guided in the right directions. “Safety and security are important. No other organization can do what the YMCA has done for me and my son. The Y is a life line for us,” she says. The YMCA is like a family to Ro-z and Jerome. There is a strong bond here. People are here to support and encourage you. They have respect for each other and they have taught her son about respect – they use those words!

“Everything major in my life has happened at the YMCA,” Ro-z says. “God gave me two gifts. He gave me the gift of my son and He led me to the Y, where there is a little community that helped me raise him.”