

AYR LEN COVELLO PASSION AWARD

NAISMITH TRIBUTE:

As a leader in health and wellness program development and education, and a member of the Springfield College staff team, James Naismith has been credited for the founding of what is now a worldwide health and wellness sports program we refer to as “Basketball”. In acknowledgement of James Naismith’s contributions to the YMCA in his endeavors to provide alternative programs to maintain healthy BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT, this recognition is directed to an individual who has given his creative life time service in outstanding guidance, direction and innovation in the field of health, wellness and sport development in the YMCA.

This Naismith award recognizes an individual who served the majority of his active and post YMCA career in the program area of health, wellness and sports development via the designing and management of program concepts and creative vision in the implementation of community wellness. In the likeness of James Naismith, this nominee possesses the insight and strength to motivate others to reach for their highest potential in terms of wellness.

INTRODUCTION OF LEN COVELLO:

Walter Price in the Ellenwood AYR Chapter nomination said it this way: Len Covello is our nominee! My relationship to Len is that he was my first boss at the YM-YWCA in Newark, New Jersey. I could not have had a better staff team to mentor my induction into ‘professional’ YMCA service than with Don Sherman, the downtown branch Executive and Jim Bunting as the Metro Director. Len was at that time the coordinator of the Physical Education Department, which included women – a very rare aspect of program development in those days.

Len was an excellent leader, teacher and mentor to me in my role as an Assistant Physical Director and certainly reinforced my decision to make the “Y” a lifelong career. Len was then and still is today a man of supreme integrity and one who expected nothing less than your best efforts in each aspect of responsibility.

At this same time I must also give credit to Len’s greatest asset – his wife Audrey who was very helpful to my young wife as part of the ‘Y Wives’ organization – one of the wonderful mentoring groups in the Y for young professionals/spouses that does not exist today.

Len graduated from Springfield College in 1941 and was active on the gymnastic team and competed in track and field as well – thus his interest in and devotion to wellness throughout his career and into retirement. By developing program around his interest and using his education and sharing his support in training and mentoring over the years as a Physical Director or as a Mid-America Field Staff team member Len has influenced Y professionals, volunteers and class/Y members to numerous to count.

Most likely more than half of those in this room today were influenced in some way by Len and his life-long love and devotion to health and wellness.

One “Y” Director noted that when Len was working in the Mid-America Field as the Health/Wellness Specialist that Len always took the time to meet one on one with young Physical Directors encouraging them to seek additional education and then followed up with support to accomplish these goals via training seminars, college credit classes and special study assignments. Len was always interested in assisting young Y directors to position themselves for career opportunity advancement and gave support and mentoring advice along the way. Len was not just another ‘National’ staff person fulfilling his duties and passing through but took a personal interest in each and every one of his ‘children’ as they grew in their careers.

Len never rested for a moment after his retirement. He has been a contributor to the ‘Old Guard Newsletter’ of NAFYR for many years providing Health and Wellness updates benefiting our retired family with hints relating to nutrition, medical suggestions, daily activity programs, spiritual wellness and staying active through volunteer activities. Len has provided the same resources for his local Grand Canyon Chapter ‘Echoes’ newsletter as well and always provides a short but most interesting presentation at Chapter meetings – even at the age of 90 plus – what a great example to live up to.

Although we could go on and on regarding Len and his enormous contributions to health and wellness as a professional for over 40 years and in retirement for well over 20 years – the picture presented here is very indicative of the man, leader, mentor, family member and wonderful friend Len is to all of us in this room. But we would be irresponsible to not recognize Len's guiding spirit over the years – his wife Audrey at the same time.

How else can we say this other than “LEN AND AUDREY – WE LOVE YOU!!

JOHN 17:21 AWARD STATEMENT:

In John 17:21 Jesus prays for his Disciples ‘THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE FATHER! MAY THEY BE IN US JUST AS YOU ARE IN ME AND I AM IN YOU. MAY THEY BE ONE, SO THAT THE WORLD WILL BELIEVE YOU SENT ME’. It is this application of unselfish giving and oneness for all humanity that was instilled in the Disciples that is also found in Len Covello who has given of himself for the betterment of our movement, organization, National and Chapter AYR groups and for humanity.

We wish to recognize this INTREPID hero from our YMCA family who has not only excelled in his career but also in his retirement and has made significant accomplishments in developing, supporting and communicating his Christian and Wellness passion with others.

In summary, ‘TO BE ONE WITH THE FATHER’. This was the inherent vision of James Naismith and the inherent vision of Len Covello.

WELCOME LEN COVELLO:

Our Praise Song reminds us of Len's dedication and application: "I REFUSE! TO SIT AROUND AND WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO DO WHAT GOD HAS CALLED ME TO DO MYSELF, OH, I COULD CHOOSE NOT TO MOVE BUT – I REFUSE!!"

Len Covello has always REFUSED AND HAS FOLLOW THROUGH AND DONE WHAT LEN WAS MADE TO DO!

I invite both Len and Audrey Covello to stand and receive the AYR Reunion 2011 John 17:21 Passion Award given in recognition of his and their application of unselfish giving and oneness for humanity.