

A Message from Our Chair

February 2024

Through advocacy efforts at the state level, our Alliance secured \$3.75 million last year for our Ys to expand or launch teen programming with a specific focus on teen mental health. YMCAs across the state have begun this work and will come together at the Alliance's Teen Mental Health Grant Kickoff meeting March 20 to learn more and collaborate.

While this will look different at each of our YMCAs over the next two years, the challenges are greater than ever for the teens we serve—and employ. We need to do this work.

At the YMCA of High Point, a big part of our focus will be training to further prepare our staff to recognize that someone is struggling, and to help get teens and their families to resources and experts that can help them. One of the things that excites me most about this work is that this will change the trajectory for 10 to 20 years to come. This is not just something we'll do right now. This is not a "program," but an intentional approach to our youth work, and our plan at High Point is to sustain this beyond the grant period through our annual campaign.

It's also exciting that our role as a community health partner is elevated through this work. Our Ys are engaging with new mental health partners and providers, and we're exploring ways to work with other local organizations to further support teens. I think we all realize that mental health work is bigger than any one of us. The Y doesn't have to be the expert or be "in charge," but with our close relationships to teens, we can be a supportive resource that is more knowledgeable about the struggles they are facing today. And we can connect them to other organizations and experts who also can help them grow and thrive.

I look forward to hearing more in the coming months about how our Ys are diving into this important work, and how we are learning from each other as we navigate this work.

Lynn Lomax,
CEO, YMCA of High Point
Chair, NC Alliance Board of Directors