

# YMCA AMBASSADOR TRAINING



**INITIATE. IGNITE. INSPIRE.**



When the global YMCA movement in Estes Park (USA) set out to live and promote youth empowerment in 2014, we at the Bavarian YMCA also set out on this journey.

The 2018 World Council meetings in Chiang Mai (Thailand) and 2022 in Aarhus (Denmark) were important stages on the way to Vision 2030.

During this time, the international partnerships of the YMCA Bavaria grew, the international Y-Camp started in 2016 and brought more than 1,000 young people from over 25 nations into contact by 2023.

Internships, work camps and youth encounters have long empowered young people in their role as global citizens and are at the heart of the YMCA.

The next milestone was reached with the YMCA Ambassador Training.

More than 20 young adults from the YMCA in Germany, Chile, Brazil, the USA, the Czech Republic, Cameroon and Hong Kong embarked on a two-year empowerment program. Developed and hosted by CVJM Bayern / YMCA Bavaria and its partners.

Learning together, initiating change processes together, shaping the YMCA, developing and implementing small and large projects contextually and with a focus on Vision 2030.

These were documented and describe ways for a young generation to lead the YMCA into the future and make a significant difference in this world.

**This report is their YMCA story.**



**INITATE.**

**IGNITE.**

**INSPIRE.**

# YMCA AMBASSADOR TRAINING

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To bring together young adults from the international YMCA movement, to learn from each other, to seek innovative answers to questions of our time, and to initiate projects as ambassadors of a generation in their YMCA.

# GOALS

# CONTENT

To perceive and reflect on contexts such as family, environment, social space, YMCA and church; to explore theological and political aspects of being an ambassador; to create a common vision; to implement a project with three people from three contexts.



# THE YAT- JOURNEY 2021-2023

A cooperation between:

CVJM Bayern (Germany)  
YMCA of Czech Republic  
ACM Sao Paulo (Brasil)  
YMCA Valparaiso (Chile)  
YMCA Cameroon  
YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne (USA)  
Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong



## **October 2021**

Online-Workshops (3 days)

## **April 2022**

Online Workshops (5 days)

## **August 2022**

Live Meeting at Hintersee,  
Germany and participation at the  
Y-Camp at Lake Waging.  
(15 days)

## **September 2022 - December 2023**

Ambassador project phase  
& Evaluation

## **February 2024**

Project documentary launch

# THE GROUP

## **BRASIL**

Marianna & Vinícius

## **CAMEROON**

Esaie Daniel & Phuebé

## **CHILE**

Diego & Pía

## **GERMANY**

Amelie, Michael, Sophie, Sophie, Victoria, Victoria & Layla

## **CZECH REPUBLIC**

Jakub & Marie

## **HONG KONG**

Karen & Oscar

## **USA**

Noah & Skyler



# VISION 2030

In July 2022 the YMCA made history. At the 20th World Council in July 2022, YMCAs across the globe voted to adopt YMCA 2030 - our first-ever shared strategy and plan.

Vision 2030 serves as a roadmap for every YMCA's strategic goals. Closely aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Vision 2030 empowers communities and young people worldwide to build a just, sustainable, equitable and inclusive world.

Following the adoption of Vision 2030, the YMCA Ambassador Training focused on implementation and linked all the projects we are presenting here to the Vision 2030.

During the project launch in August 2022, the projects were assigned to the Pillars of Impact and agreed to integrate this within their own YMCA context.

This generation of ambassadors made it clear from the outset that Vision 2030 is in the hands of young people at the YMCA and that it is they who will lead the YMCA into the future.

## VISION 2030 in a nutshell



# THE PROJECTS

**OPEN CAFE AMELIE**

**CLIMBING TO NEW HEIGHTS JAKUB**

**FULL OF GREEN KAREN**

**COMMUNICATING THE COMMUNICATION PROBLEM MARIE**

**POETRY WORKSHOP SOPHIE**

**DON ´T JUDGE A BOOK BY IT ´S COVER SOPHIE**

**THIS IS YOU SKYLER**

**START IMPACTING LAYLA**

**INTERNATIONAL CAMP FOR YOUNG AFRICAN**

**ENTREPRENEURS ESAIE DANIEL**

**FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN**

**SCHOOLS PHUEBÉ**

**YMCA LEADERS MARIANNA & VINICIUS**

**VACACIONES FELICES PÍA & DIEGO**







# OPEN CAFE

## ABOUT ME

AMELIE RODER, 26

HOME YMCA:

REDNITZHEMBACH, GERMANY

CURRENT RESIDENCE:

NÜRNBERG, GERMANY

I grew up in Rednitzhembach a big village in the south of Nuremberg (20 min train drive), Germany. When I started studying Geography in 2016 I moved to Nuremberg and started to work voluntariliy for the CVJM Bavaria. During the Covid pandemic I was voted in the main committee of my home YMCA in Rednitzhembach. And could participate even I was not living there anymore.

For my Masters in Geography (City and regional Planning) I moved to Bayreuth. And volontiered leading the young-adult group. At the time I got elected for being second chairwoman of the CVJM Rednitzhembach. I got into the YMCA through my confirmation.

The YMCA organises for the protestant parish the confirmation camp. This is were I got to know the association, visited the teenagers' group for years before I joined in voluntarily myself.

## MY YMCA

The YMCA Rednitzhembach is a small local association with about 40 active members and two regular groups for children and teenagers. The YMCA also organises festivals and church services for the youth throughout the year. There are only volunteers working. The association celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2023.

The YMCA Rednitzhembach e.V. also runs the open communal youth club "Das Wohnzimmer." (engl. "The living room.") of the municipality of Rednitzhembach.

Every Friday the living room is open and a free programme takes place. The programme does not have any Christian content, but the volunteers with a Christian background who take on the counter service ensure that there is an appreciative atmosphere. The living room is located in the YMCA house, so the young people can also get to know the YMCA.

More about the YMCA: <https://cvjm-rednitzhembach.de>

## MY PROJECT

### The underlying idea

Every year, the YMCA Rednitzhembach holds a Youth Bible Week. Every evening for a week there is a programme for young people. The target group is mainly preperants, confirmands and all other young people.

During this week, all the staff help together and put on a colourful programme, usually with a preacher from the YMCA Bavaria. Traditionally, there is always a dinner for the staff before the evening programme. Until 7-8 years ago, some staff members lived, ate and slept together in the YMCA house during the Youth Bible Week. So they moved into the YMCA for that week. This was always a particularly nice atmosphere for me, as it was nice to experience so much fellowship there. Unfortunately, this tradition has fallen asleep.

Also, in the course of the Ambassador Programme, I thought a lot about the treasure of the Open Youth Club. As a christian association, we have the opportunity to invite young people to us in a low threshold way. I combined these two lines of thought in my Ambassador Project.



Firstly, I wanted to create an Open Café for all young people in Rednitzhembach so that they could get to know us. And beyond that, I wanted to create a nice atmosphere for all the YMCA staff, to give them the feeling during the Youth Bible Week that someone is always there.

### The concept

The aim was to open a Café in the youth centre during the Youth Bible Week and thus open a space for young people from Rednitzhembach and the surrounding area. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the youth and also we as an association had a hard time. Fewer young people came to our programmes, which could only take place under certain conditions, and the young people withdrew more and more into the private sphere. This promoted mental health issues. After this

crisis was overcome, it was important to bring the young people and also the YMCA staff back to the youth centre and the YMCA and to make community possible, which for a long time was only possible in the digital world.

The project is part of the Vision 2023 of the World YMCA in the pillar of impact "Community Wellbeing". The project made it possible to live community again and to create an open space for meetings. In this way, people, especially young people, were able to meet each other again and experience how much they are valued.

In September, I started with the preparations for the Open Cafe and prepared everything for a relaxed cafe operation (ordering coffee, finding cake recipes, organising coffee machines, etc.).

### Project timetable

PHASE 01 PREPARATION

September 2022

PHASE 02 REALISATION

26.-30. October 2022

PHASE 03 EVALUATION

July 2023



Another very important point was the advertising. With the help of a co-worker from my YMCA, I designed a flyer and posters, which I had professionally printed. Finally, I distributed flyers and posters at the school, in the town hall, at bookstores and at the train station. I also convinced my association to invest money in online advertising on Instagram.

At the end of October, I opened the Cafe for 5 days from 2pm to 9pm each day. I baked cakes and prepared coffee for guests. In the mornings before the Cafe opened, I stood at the station and handed out flyers to students who passed through the station on their way to school.



## MY EXPERIENCES

The offer was well received, especially by the YMCA staff. Many gave me the feedback that it is nice to have a place for community. It turned out that staff members came especially early to work in the Cafe and to have a coffee with a relaxed conversation. In addition, old staff members who are no longer involved in YMCA work came by and we talked about many different topics. It was especially nice that two boys came by every late afternoon to gamble. They used the space and the TV with Playstation for their meetings.

I myself had the feeling that through the Open Cafe, the youth meeting place and the YMCA as a whole was finally revived after the Covid pandemic and that many of the staff and young people could use the room as their space again.



## MY CONCLUSION

The Ambassador Project of the YMCA Bavaria inspired me to try something new in my YMCA. The project was gladly accepted by the visitors and found to be good. There was even a demand to repeat this offer and to open the youth club more regularly. Nevertheless, the absolute number of Cafe visitors was manageable. A total of about 20 people took up the offer, many of whom were YMCA volunteers.

I think that the level of awareness of the youth meeting room can be further increased, whereby more frequent opening hours in the afternoon could increase the number of visitors.

Furthermore, it is important to think about and ask the young people themselves what they would like to see on offer in the youth centre.

An adequate, well received programme in the youth centre could attract more young people. In addition, this could bring them to the YMCA in a low-threshold way and inspire them to take part in other (christian) activities.

According to the motto "I think this employee is cool, who is standing behind the counter here in the youth centre, I would also like to be part of the YMCA Programme for young people that he organises".



A person wearing a black jacket and a cap is sitting on a large rock, looking out over a vast mountain range. The mountains are rocky and partially covered with green vegetation. The sky is overcast and hazy. The overall scene is a scenic view of a mountain landscape.

# CLIMBING TO NEW HEIGHTS

## EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH ADVENTURE SPORTS

### ABOUT ME

JAKUB MALÍNEK, 22  
PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

I am a dedicated student at CTU Prague, majoring in Mechanical Engineering with a focus on numerical computing and design. My academic journey is complemented by a passion for sports, particularly beach volleyball, where I have achieved national recognition. My love for team sports and community involvement led me to the YMCA.

I'm currently pursuing my studies in Mechanical Engineering at CTU Prague. Alongside my studies, I have professional experience in numerical computing with the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. I have been working on rocket development for European competitions in our student team.

My journey with the YMCA started in Pelhrimov. I currently serve on the committee of our newly established YMCA Pelhrimov and volunteer as an instructor at summer camps. I also contribute to various events hosted by YMCA Jindřichův Hradec.

### MY YMCA

The YMCA Pelhrimov is a vibrant community center that focuses on the holistic development of young people. It provides a range of activities including sports, educational workshops, and volunteering opportunities. "Cast thy bread upon the water, after many days thou shalt find it." (Ecclesiastes 11:1). That is the motto of our local YMCA and I do believe we are filling it to the very last drop.

What makes YMCA Pelhrimov special to me is its commitment to fostering a supportive environment for youth. It has been established for only 2 years now and we have provided more than 15 yearly activities for children and adults and not spoken about the summer camps and other 1 time activities in a year. We have created a warm place where the people and activities blossom.

## MY PROJECT

**Goals:** The primary goal of this project is to introduce young individuals to the world of climbing, focusing on building physical strength, mental resilience, and fostering a sense of community among the youth.

### Steps:

Initiating Climbing Workshops: Organizing beginner and intermediate climbing workshops to teach the fundamentals and safety aspects of climbing.

### Setting Up Climbing Club:

Establishing a climbing club within the YMCA to encourage regular practice and skill development.

### Mentorship Programs:

Pairing experienced climbers with beginners for mentoring, fostering a supportive learning environment.

This project aligns with Vision 2030 by promoting physical health, mental well-being, and community engagement through adventure sports.

Leading the climbing project has been an exhilarating and rewarding experience. It has not only allowed me to share my passion for climbing but also to witness the transformative impact it has on young individuals in terms of confidence, problem-solving skills, and camaraderie.



## MY EXPERIENCES

My passion for adventure sports, especially climbing, and the desire to introduce this empowering sport to others motivated me to initiate this project due to the lack of social activity among university students.

The successful establishment of regular climbing lessons, the enthusiastic participation in workshops, and the wonderful friendships we have been able to establish along the way.

Future endeavors could include expanding to other aspects of this kind of activity with the young adult group. In our capital, I do not see many events for university students promoted at schools.

YMCA can evolve by integrating more adventure sports into its programs, appealing to the adventurous spirit of today's youth, and promoting a balanced lifestyle that combines physical activity with environmental awareness. What people may look for nowadays is a place where they can feel safe and that they belong to the community.

Leading this project has been an enriching experience, allowing me to connect with and inspire young individuals. It has taught me the value of perseverance, teamwork, and community spirit.





# FULL OF GREEN

## ABOUT ME

KAREN LI, 22  
HONG KONG

I am Karen Li, 22 years old from Hong Kong. I am a final year student from Lingnan University, majoring in sociology. I join YMCA since 2019. I am a committee member in the University & College YMCA in Hong Kong. In these years, I have taken part in different roles, including joint school committees and student committees from my university.

## MY YMCA

The purpose for Uni-Y is to nurture tertiary students into future leaders with strong adaptability, creative insights and passion to serve the community. As the committee member, we have lot of chance to explore and build our ideas. Every one can have the chance to be the leader and I have been the president

of a large-scale volunteer event that serves over 600 people in need during the pandemic. For me, YMCA is a warm family that mix with people from different backgrounds. Each of us have different strengths and weaknesses, but we have the same goal that is promote more young people to participate in YMCA activities. In addition to local activities, we are also able to connect with overseas, so as to broaden our horizons and network.

## MY PROJECT

My project is "Full of Green". It took place on November 10th and 17th, 2022 from 1:00 noon to 5:30 pm. Full of Green is setting up a booth in the school to collect recyclables from students and staff, and then transport them to the community recycling center "Green in the District" for recycling. The recyclables can accumulate points, and participants can exchange for gifts by accumulating designated points.

The booth also provide environmental protection tips and additional recycling information. The purpose of the event is to raise public awareness of environmental protection and to cultivate the habit of recycling among participants. It is difficult to avoid the production of solid waste in daily life, such as plastic bottle paper products and so on. And under the epidemic situation, more people choose to take out food, which leads to an increase in related plastic items. However, the overall recycling rate in Hong Kong is only about 28%. The recycling rate is low, and many items are not fully utilized for recycling. Therefore, through this event, we hope that the public can recycle in a more convenient way, and at the same time understand other daily habits of environmental protection

so as to cultivate more environmentally friendly people, reduce waste production and recycle properly.

This project promotes the message of protecting and regenerating our planet to youth, which fits one of the pillars from Vision 2030, Sustainable Planet.

### MY EXPERIENCE

This activity attracted many students and staff to participate, and they learned about their daily recycling habits. Some participants started to develop the habit of storing recyclables because of this event. It can be seen that the event can become a driving force for some students and staff to recycle. A total of 59 people participated in this activity, and nearly 90 kilograms of recyclables were recycled.



I am very encouraged by this result, because there are not many people participating in my own budget, and it also means that as long as the first step is taken, different changes can be made.

I think this activity can be held regularly in the future, so as to encourage more people to participate and cultivate public awareness of environmental protection. I think getting more young people involved needs to scale up the event. Because I am the only one preparing for this event, the results that can be achieved are limited. In the future, volunteer teams can be recruited to attract more people into the YMCA, and activities related to environmental protection can be held so that the activities can continue.

I think that for the YMCA to become an important place for young people, it needs to start from the perspective of young people. For example, the theme of this activity is environmental protection, which is of public concern, and indirectly made some people who don't know YMCA come into contact with us. By using daily issues as an entry point so that they can join and get to know the association, more young people can join in and promote the YMCA movement.



香港中華基督教青年會  
大學青年會(嶺南大學)

## 綠綠無窮

### Full of Green

提供限定回收物品獲得分數，  
累積足夠分數去換取豐富禮品！  
仲可以了解到環保小貼士！

**Full of Green Booth**  
Date: November 10 & 17, 2022  
Time: 13:00 - 17:30  
Venue: WYL G/F

回收物例子

- 紙張
- 紙板
- 玻璃樽
- 易拉罐
- 膠樽
- 膠袋
- 紙盒
- 紙張
- 刀叉
- 湯匙

快啲開始去收集，  
一齊養成回收嘅習慣！

回收有獎！

活動及換領禮品詳情可空間宣傳電郵  
聯絡：9218 8738 (Karen)

uniy.lu  
University YMCA LU

W. Adventures  
Begin Here



# COMMUNICATING THE COMMUNICATION PROBLEM

## ABOUT ME

MARIE VALIHRACHOVÁ, 20  
KYJOV, CZECH REPUBLIC

Hi, my name is Marie Valihrachová and I'm 20 years old. I live in Kyjov, small, lovely city in south of Czech Republic (close to borders with Austria). I have 4 younger siblings and have been passionate reader since I was little girl. I've lived in Kyjov my whole life - went to elementary school here and then I got into the eight-year gymnasium, where I successfully graduated last year.

In September 2022 I entered Mendel University in Brno, where I studied economics and management. From September this year, I will be studying to become a teacher for the second level of elementary school. Since my dad was a leader in our local YMCA SCOUT, I've become part of YMCA at the age of 3 and haven't stopped ever since.

Three years ago, I started to help my dad with scout finances and now I'm fully responsible for money, transportation to camp and communication with our kids' parents.

## MY YMCA

As I already said, my YMCA is YMCA SCOUT. It's part of YMCA Czech Republic and is divided in 11 smaller groups. In my YMCA group there are currently 81 registered members and we're still growing. Our mission is to bring kids back to connection with nature, to create safe space for them, to educate them according to scouting ideas, principles and values and make sure they grow up to be good people.

Kids meet once a week for an hour and half with their peer group to learn about scouting skills and once a month we all go on a day trip - usually hike in the countryside, to a museum, etc. The highlight of the year-rounded activities is the summer camp. We spend 14 days in nature, sleep in tents, cook in the field kitchen, without electricity, internet, and society. I love about our YMCA group that we're like a huge family (quite literally, because there are several families with all their members in scout); we know each other since childhood, know we can rely on others, and the best thing (in my opinion) is that we work with kids during year, so we know them and they aren't just some strange kids we see once a year at camp.

## **MY PROJECT**

I've decided to name my project "Communicating the communication problem", because communication is really an issue in my YMCA. The thing is that there is a big group of young leaders (my age) who are taking care of all the actions around the year, those people are working with the kids and planning the program and summer camp. But there is also still an old leader who ruled our scout group before us

and sometimes our opinions and visions don't really match with his opinions and visions, but neither of us says anything. Because of that there can be some uncomfortable situations when both groups think something, but it stays unspoken, and it creates toxic environment. My goal was to sit us all around one table and openly talk about things we don't like in our community, what we don't like about each other's actions and how we can improve so everyone would be happy, and we would have a clear plan on how to work with our children and how to keep up with YMCA values. Basically, how to be united and how to act as a one united group. Just to have one, completely honest talk.

The origin time frame was to be done with whole situation by the end of December 2022. That didn't really happen, because I had to match timetables of 18 people, which showed to be an impossible task. Eventually we set the date to 1st of April. Before this face-to-face event I begin with preparation. I sent out information about what I want from other leaders, how I want them to prepare and ask few of them to bring some snacks, so we could have this potentially difficult talk in nice and cozy environment.

We started at 6 pm and ended at 9:30 pm. It was exhausting, but I have to say that we've discussed the most pressing topics and set up date for another meeting.

Growing meeting has also already taken place, we continued to discuss the things that needed to be resolved and agreed on the date of the next meeting. I like the fact that we continue to work together, and we are managing to overcome our problem. I believe this project fits into Vision 2030, as it is based on one of the pillars - community wellbeing. I don't think we can possibly work together and create healthy environment for children to grow up in, if we don't feel good and safe ourselves.

## **MY EXPERIENCES**

I have to say that I was very nervous and scared about this project, because I felt like it was nothing compared to other participants in YAT program, but my "colleagues" from my YAT team assured me, that if this is what my local YMCA needs, it's more than enough. I'm very thankful for the community we've created in Germany in general because we really do have each other's backs and we're here to show our support.

I can confidently declare this project a success because we solved all the issues we planned to solve and even agreed on further cooperation. In this way I can ensure that in my YMCA there is communication between the younger and older side of the leadership.

So far, we have been able to meet with once a month, but I fear that in the next school year this will be significantly less frequent, so there could be a decline in the current success. But I still believe that the current situation is a huge shift from the previous one, because we younger people have much less inhibitions and we solve problems immediately. There is still a lack of clear communication from the senior leader. It seems to me that he still has some inhibitions that prevent him from being straightforward.

Still YMCA seems like the best place to grow up in. I believe that without having such a supportive group of friends (whether childhood or international), I wouldn't be able to come up with such a huge change and, more importantly, I wouldn't be able to see it through.

# POETRY

# WORKSHOP

## ABOUT ME

SOPHIE, 22

HOME YMCA:

MÜNCHBERG, GERMANY

CURRENT RESIDENCE:

NÜRNBERG, GERMANY



My name is Sophie, I am 22 years old and as of right now I live in Nuremberg. I am currently in my 5th semester of university where I am studying for a bachelor's degree in German and English and American studies. Among my studies I am working at a publishing company which I very much enjoy.

I grew up in a small town called Münchberg in Bavaria where I lived for the first 18 years of my life. At the age of 13 one of my friends from school asked me to come with her to a youth group at the YMCA in our town. At first I wasn't sure whether I should come with her- I come from a family of atheists, at home we never really talked about God or faith and we only went to church on Christmas.

I didn't know much about faith except for what they taught us in school and I felt a little bit like being asked to enter a world I knew nothing about. When I decided to come with my friend to the youth group I thought this would be a one-time thing. I definitely didn't come for the God/faith part but more for the fun part my friend told me about.

Looking back at it now I believe it was this immediate interest and feeling of being welcome that made me stick around to come more often. The following summer I went to a summer camp with the Y and after that it was a signed deal: from now on I came to the Y at least two times a week and over time I started helping out with our children's group and a little over a year later I helped with confirmation classes.

At the age of 15 or 16 I started volunteering at the youth group my journey once started with. After turning 18 and moving away from my hometown during Covid I don't really have a role in my YMCA anymore. I come home every now and then and help out at Youth Weeks but I don't come home on a regular basis which makes it impossible for me to have a consistent role in my Y.

Some of my closest friends to this day I met at the Y when I was a teen. We shared so much over the years—from laughter to tears to experiences I know I probably wouldn't have had the privilege to experience elsewhere. In my teen years my friend group and I spent every free minute we had at the Y: we came there after school and stayed as long as we could after the official program ended.

## MY YMCA

My YMCA definitely has a special place in my heart. The first thing I think of when someone asks me about my Y is home. Over the years I met all of these amazing loving people at my Y and I had so much fun being there.

## MY PROJECT

For my project I decided to do a writing workshop on a summer camp. As a time frame we had approximately two hours time to meet up, talk about our experiences we already had with writing and to write some short text passages.





We specifically each wrote an “Elfchen” (“elevenie”) which is a short poem with eleven words and a given pattern. We also talked about two of the poetry slams texts people wrote before coming to the workshop. They were texts that dealt with God and faith in general and after talking about them the people who wrote them also had the possibility of sharing their text/poetry slam on one of the evenings in front of the whole camp.

As for the Vision 2030 my project fits into the Pillar of Impact of Community Wellbeing as my main goal was to create a safe space where people can be who they are and share whatever they want to.

## **MY EXPERIENCES**

I think for me it was a deeply personal motivation I had for my project. When I was a teen I was a very shy and quiet person and I never felt like I belonged anywhere or like it was okay being who I was. Since I made this experience myself I wanted to give other people a different experience than the one I had.

I wanted to create a safe space for every person, a space where everyone can be just whoever they are.



**DON'T JUDGE**

**A BOOK**

**BY IT'S COVER**

**ABOUT ME**

SOPHIE WEISS ,19  
YMCA WEISSENSTADT  
GERMANY

Hey, my name is Sophie Weiß. I'm 19 years old and my hometown is in Bavaria, Germany. It's named "Weißenstadt", which you could translate to "white lake city". I graduated in 2023 and I'm currently studying in Bamberg to become an Elementary school teacher. Throughout the years of my childhood, I participated in certain activities of the YMCA, but my confirmation, at the age 14, was the turning point in my connection to God and the YMCA. Since the beginning of 2019 I started to help in my Y as a volunteer in our Children-, Youth-program and from 2022 to 2023 I was a part of the managing committee.

Unfortunately I had to resign, do to my move to Bamberg but I'm still part of a program so-called "Trainee", were teens (14-19) get to learn about the tasks of an volunteer and how to work in a team. "Trainee" was also a very important part of my projects.

**MY YMCA**

We are a rather small town with a population of about 3.400. So it's obvious that our number of members isn't very large. In our YMCA we are like a big Family, it is very normal for us to know everyone, at least by the look or the name.

Most of the time we also know the participants that join our Youth-program (“Dipfla”) because they also were members of our Children-program (“Jungschar”). That’s the special thing about my YMCA. We, as volunteers, can accompany the participants throughout their Childhood, their youth and their adulthood. We can witness their development with God. Friendships, on a deeper level, develop over the years and grow in the community.

## MY PROJECT

Don’t judge a book by it’s cover!  
That is the title of my project. It is all about the stereotypes and misconceptions of the YMCA in my area and how to change them. The plan was divided in two parts, the Christmas tree sell (27.11.2022 preparation) and Church in the ruins (17.06.2023 main). As I mentioned earlier, the “Trainee” class of 2022 played a big part in the realization of both Projects.

The Christmas tree sell took about one month to plan and organize. It took place at the Christmas market of our hometown.

The goal was to make the YMCA more present to the people of our region, because the majority barely knows what it is, but also to strengthen the bond between our association and the other organizations in the area. The first step was to find a retailer who would sell us the trees on commission.

For the second step we needed a transportation because we had to pick them up 35 kilometers from Weißenstadt. And thirdly the easiest part of the project, we had to find volunteers for the sale itself. We started a fire in a fire pit, fetched our music box, played some Christmas music, and started selling the trees. We also offered a delivery service for the trees, in exchange of a donation. Fifty-five out of sixty-five Christmas trees were sold on that day. The money that we earned was used for the second project Church in the ruins.



We started planning the main Project in November of 2022. Church in the ruins (CTR). A service with worship, a sermon, and prayers however not in a Church, like usual, but in the ruins of an old factory located near the center of "Weißenstadt". The goal was to overcome the normal frame of a service and to make it easy to join. We wanted to show the YMCA, the message of god and the community, to all people of our region. The main steps for the implementation were, to find a preacher, a band for worship, start advertising the event, to get approval on all the regulations for example selling Food and a program for the evening. The last barrier was the funding, because the money that was collected in the Christmas tree retail wasn't enough. We split up the different tasks and distributed them in our team.

The first action was to spread the information about the event, where we printed out over 1000 flyers and handed them out to each household in our city. Next step were the preparations for the main event. Arranging a stage for the band, organizing the selling booths for food and drinks and the main attraction, the bouncy bounce.

All these things took us about seven days to set up the foundation for the occasion. Our last problem, the funding, was gladly solved by "Zukunftsausschuss", a foundation of our county to support young people and their projects.

The event started in the early afternoon with some cake, games and some music. Through the whole afternoon more and more visitors came and enjoyed the event. In the evening at 6pm the service started and our preacher, Daniel Gass, told us that he's proud of the young generation and the people who organized and managed the whole day. After his service we continued our evening with worship and finally finished it with deconstructing the stage and the whole setup.

Both projects are combined by the topic of pillar 4, "A Just World", and our plans of fulfilling vision 2030. One big step of it is the inclusion of young people regardless their believes and giving them a safe space to meet each other. With the events mentioned above I think we opened up towards people in our region and showed them the opposite of their first thought stereo types.

## MY EXPERIENCES

What was my motivation? Of course, the rising number of members in our programs, but also the Positive feedback we received on both Project, from the my YMCA the people in our city and the visitors, are playing a big part too. Regardless of that, my Trainee volunteers and their involvement and development during this project, were my biggest motivation.

What was successful? Despite small problems, both project were a success. It was a bonding experience between the old and the young generation in our Y, but also with other associations of our city. The message, of us being an open YMCA, was communicated and clear for all visitors.

What is still missing and where do I see potential? One of the biggest problems was the funding of the big event. We need to organize more programs, like the Christmas tree sale, in order to collect enough money for Church in the ruins, which will be continued next year. We can combine that with the aspect of appearing more often as a YMCA, for example on markets like the Christmas market in our home town.

Where dose the YMCA need to change? I can only speak for my Y, but we need to get out of our comfort zone, like we did at Church in the ruins, more often. And I also think that raising awareness on certain topics, such as different genders, religion or look still needs to be discussed more.





# THIS IS YOU

## ABOUT ME

SKYLER NEUHAUS, 20  
JORGENSEN FAMILY YMCA  
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA, USA

My name is Skyler Neuhaus, and I am 20 years old. I am from the United States, Fort Wayne, Indiana. I am from the Jorgensen Family YMCA and am employed there as a childcare worker, and I work for most of our youth and family and childcare programs. I am studying Social Work at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. I was hired by the YMCA in August 2019, and since then I have won 3 separate awards for my exceptional work in the childcare field.

## MY YMCA

To many, my YMCA is just a gym and fitness facility. To me, the YMCA serves hundreds, if not thousands, of youth through our countless youth programs. What makes my YMCA so special to me is the community I have found at my YMCA

and the families I have made close relationships. I love the impact I can make on so many children's lives every day at this YMCA, and it keeps me driven to do more.

## MY PROJECT

I was inspired to create more mental health programs in the wake of the COVID-19 Epidemic when I saw an intense need for more mental health programs in my community as the mental health issues increasingly worsened for youth.

That's why when Daniel introduced Vision 2030 in Germany at the live Ambassador meetings, I was immediately focused on the "Community Wellbeing" pillar of impact. My YMCA was always very strong in physical wellbeing, but there were no mental wellbeing programs.

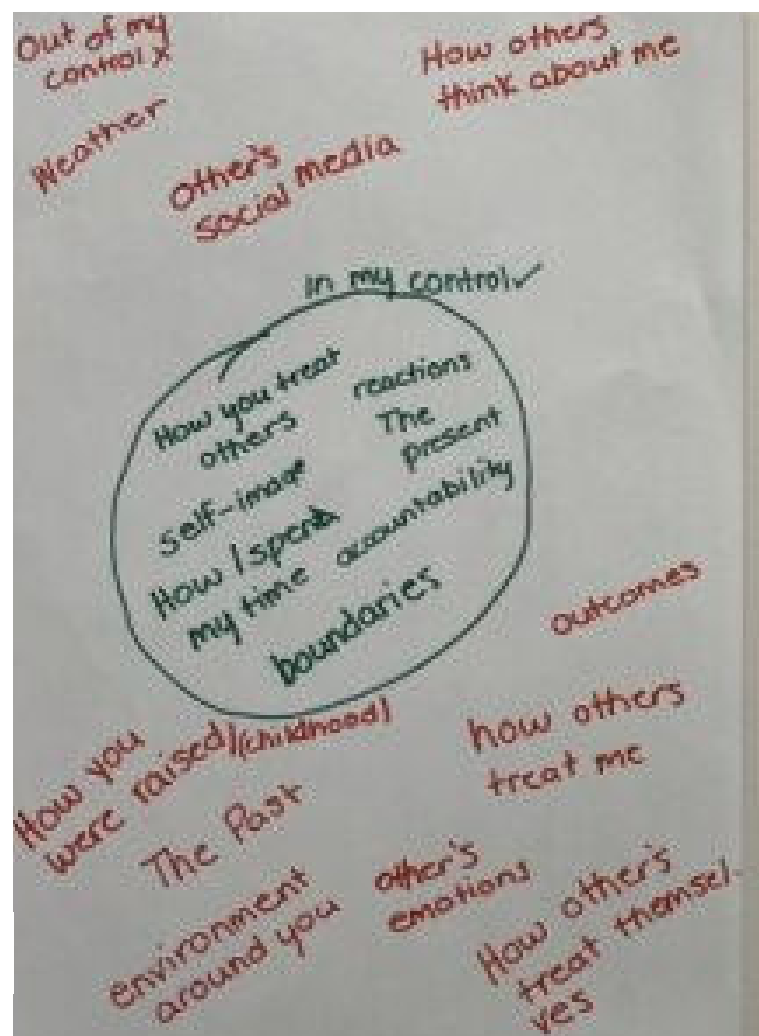
Through the ambassador trainings and teachings of Vision 2030, and my own knowledge from studying social work, I was able to come up with the Jorgensen Family YMCA's first ever mental health program for teens. This was a small group, titled "This is YOU".

The program was set up as a small group that would be held every month in our chapel room at the YMCA. Teens would come once or twice a month on a Friday after school to discuss mental health topics and create life goals. The program started in December and the first couple meetings were designed to help students create New Year's Resolutions, and we utilized these New Year's Resolutions to propel conversations about various mental health topics. This was a safe space where teens could come and discuss anything they wanted to and needed to about their life without any judgement.

I presented this program to my entire YMCA staff, and it was a huge hit with the staff. I had an anonymous donor give a large amount of money towards this program, so I was able to purchase resources and provide snacks at every meeting.

I really wanted this program to serve as a space for teens to feel like they could have important discussions they couldn't have anywhere else. I wanted to mentor teens through tough life situations and help them accomplish their goals. The program was, in my opinion, a huge success.

We had a wide range of teens come through the program. We had 20 signed up for the program, and we had about 8-10 teens at every meeting. These teens had a wide range of mental health struggles and goals. These were issues as small as needing to do better in math class, getting in a fight with a friend.



There were teens with issues as big as being clinically depressed and too anxious to go to school. I had one teen whose new year's goal was to be able to shower every other day, because they were so depressed, they couldn't bring themselves to shower. I had one teen who was struggling because their father had just gotten out of jail. No matter how big or small the issue was, I really tried to help all of these teens equally in accomplishing their goals and guiding them through tough life situations. I made some very strong bonds with these teens, and we had some extremely powerful conversations. We would start each meeting with an icebreaker and a team building game, then we would transition into discussing new year's goals and mental health conversations, with a mental health topic picked for each meeting.

## **MY EXPERIENCES**

What motivated me was seeing the growth of these teens through each meeting and hearing them tell me how much the group was helping them. The program was a huge hit, and it played a huge role in helping these teens navigate difficult situations in their lives.

I received wonderful reviews from parents, telling me how much the program was helpful for their children, and the teens really seemed to bond together as a team and become open and vulnerable during group discussions. I could share multiple success stories that came out of this program, and I am immensely proud of its successes. This, to me, is only a small portion of the potential my YMCA has in creating a safe space for teens and mental health programs.

I believe there is so much more work to be done. I eventually want to create my own job position where I am a youth advocate for this YMCA and the surrounding school system, and I want to be an onsite social worker who can continue to create programs to align with the mental health needs of the youth in the community and mentor teens.

The ymca needs to become more open to mental health programs for this change to take place. I believe this teen small group was the first step in the right direction for youth advocacy work at my YMCA, and I think that the more people who hear about my successes with this program, the more my YMCA will be able to implement further mental health programming for teens.





# START

# IMPACTING

## ABOUT ME

LAYLA SAUERBREY, 22  
PROJECT YMCA:  
YMCA VALPARAÍSO, CHILE  
CURRENT RESIDENCE:  
NÜRNBERG, GERMANY

My name is Layla, I am 22 years old and I currently live in Nuremberg, Germany. I come from a local YMCA in a very small village where my parents took me since I was a baby. There I participated in children and youth groups and started volunteering in sunday school and youth camps.

After finishing school I spent a voluntary year at the YMCA Valparaíso in Chile. Since then I have great interest and passion for the worldwide YMCA movement and especially for the YMCA in Chile.

Since I've been studying social work in Nuernberg, I can't be at my local home YMCA that often, but I'm

participating and volunteering in programs for young adults and in the international area in the YMCA Bavaria.

During my studies I had the opportunity to do an internship again at the YMCA Valparaíso. So I thought, why don't I just do my project with the people in Valparaíso?

## MY YMCA (YMCA VALPARAÍSO)

Since I did my project in the YMCA Valparaíso, which is not my home YMCA but I feel very connected to it, I try to describe it as best as I can.

The YMCA offers activities for people of all ages in the areas of fitness, social projects and volunteering.

For me personally, the young people are the heart of the YMCA Valparaíso. They meet weekly in their youth group, where they spend time together, plan different activities and talk about life and faith. They also go out on the streets every Friday and provide a meal for people, affected by homelessness.

The pandemic also hit the YMCA work and for a long time the youth group could not continue as before. At the time of my project, the youth group began to meet regularly again, to restart their activities and to renew their concept.

What makes the YMCA Valparaíso special to me, is the people who make the place a home and the motivation of the young people who take action where they see needs, as in the work with people who are homeless.



## MY PROJECT

start impacting: Considering that the youth group was restarting after a long time of interruption, the project should be a starting point to give new motivation and perspectives on the impact we as a group can have on our surroundings. Inspired by VISION 2030 the aim was to discover possibilities, create a common vision, and develop new project ideas.

I have spent some time volunteering at the YMCA Valparaíso, still it is not my YMCA, so I asked a Chilean friend to start a project team. Together we worked out an idea for a workshop and presented it to the Secretary General.



We invited people from the youth group. We wanted to create a space where the participants' voice is being heard and the direction and result is determined by them.

First workshop day: We shared our story of how we came to the YMCA and what's our personal motivation being part of that group. We talked about the VISION 2030 and what it means specifically for our context. In small groups we worked on the four pillars, identified obstacles and possibilities in our surroundings.

second workshop day: We drew the four pillars of VISION 2030 on posters and started brainstorming

about what of those pillars could be important to us. Ideas came, problems were identified, project ideas were shared, discussion started and the posters were filled with lots of thoughts and ideas. We tried to figure out the most mentioned topics.

In the end, we had three groups each working on one topic that was important to them: a recycling project for new furniture, a group for the improvement of the existing work with homeless people and a new project that works specifically with menstrual hygiene products for persons in homelessness.



## MY EXPERIENCES

I loved realizing the project in a team and it was very motivating to get the support of the responsables in the YMCA. But what motivated me most was the energy of the participants, that moment when we couldn't stop talking and discussing because of all the ideas. Unfortunately, it was a little bit difficult to start action after the workshop, because the group did

not meet for some weeks. Next time I would make sure that some following meetings can take place to further develop the ideas in the small groups and set goals.

I learnt so much during the project process and got inspired by the others.

Trust young people's ideas, give them chances and support them. They will have a great impact!





## ABOUT US

# INTERNATIONAL CAMP FOR YOUNG AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURS

PATRICK ESAÏE DANIEL NWENTIEGHO  
CAMEROON YMCA

As part of the YMCA AMBASSADOR TRAINING program, we were asked to carry out actions aimed at impacting our community. The team consisting of NWENTIEGHO Patrick Esaïe Daniel and Phuebé KOTZINE BATOCHOU organized an international camp for young African entrepreneurs in partnership with the Cameroon YMCA. This activity, which brought together 07 countries, led to the creation of a pan-African youth entrepreneurship council. One of the objectives was to encourage young people in YMCAs and society at large to build their capacity to develop their communities. This activity, initiated by NWENTIEGHO Patrick Esaïe Daniel, branch youth delegate in Cameroon YMCA, saw the participation of the Cameroonian government and other players in youth entrepreneurship.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS OF THIS FIRST EDITION

The International Camp for Young African Entrepreneurs (CIJEA) is an initiative of the Cameroon national association of young entrepreneurs (ANJEC). Africa according to the philosophy "go collectively to win individually". In preparation for the first edition, ANJEC worked with several partners, including the Central African National Council Of Young Entrepreneurs, ANSWERS GROUP, etc., to mobilize countries and organize the event.

Mobilization of countries and organization of the committee in charge of preparation. This collaboration made it possible to restructure the organizational framework and mobilize nearly 18 French-speaking countries and 6 English speaking countries.

The first edition of the CIJEA was held in Cameroon, in the city of Yaoundé from November 16 to 18, 2023 at the National Museum, under the co-sponsorship of the Ministries of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Social Economy and Crafts, and the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education of the Republic of Cameroon. The following points marked this first edition:



1. The involvement of the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon through clear instructions to the sectorial administrations
2. The presence of various authorities:
  - Ministerial: The Minister of Small and Medium Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts of the State of Cameroon, His Excellency Mr. Achille BASSILEKIN III; The General Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education, Mr. Zachée Robert Théophile BENGA representing the Minister; the General Secretary of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications of Cameroon Mr. MOHAMADOU SAOUDI; responsible for the Ministry of Young Comorian Dame ECHATA IBRAHIM NGAZI
  - Parliamentarians: the Senator Françoise PUENE (Ambassador Youth connect in Cameroon and CEO of Franco Hotels)
  - Resident representative of IAI CAMEROUN etc.
3. The presence of private players in youth entrepreneurship in Cameroon, as following : Turkish and Cameroonian Businessmen’s association (TURCABA), with his President Fabrice FUNIBA, Mr Philippe TAGNE NOUBISSI CEO of Group Dovv, OUSSEINI MOUSSA spokesman of EL HADJ BABA AHLMADOU DAMPULO; The patronage of young entrepreneurs in Cameroon (PAJEC)
4. The presence of private partners such as: ALLIANZ ASSURANCE CAMEROUN, AGRO-PME, AGRIBUSINESS INVESTMENT, JEC, LIVING STONES, YMCA-CAMEROUN, Cabinet GROWTH, LEADERSHIP, INTELLIUM INCUBATOR etc.

5. The mobilization of 24 African countries, including 18 French-speaking countries and 06 English-speaking countries.
  - The participation of 07 countries: CAMEROON, Mali, Togo, Equatorial Guinea, Central Africa, COMOROS, CHAD
  - The participation of entrepreneurs from 07 regions in Cameroon: CENTER, WEST, NORTH, NORTHWEST, SOUTH, EAST, LITTORAL.
6. The total number of participants was estimated at at least 400, including 15 Central Africans, 07 Comorians, 1 CHADIAN, 01 Equatoguinean, 01 Togolese, 01 Malian and 374 Cameroonians.
7. The creation of a PANAFRICAN COUNCIL FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURSHIP (COPEJ) under the coordination of the sectorial ministries (MINPMEESA AND MINJEC). Mr. NWENTIEGHO Patrick has been appointed Chairman and Mrs MADZO GLADYS Treasurer.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS OF THIS FIRST EDITION**

The difficulties encountered in organizing and holding the CIJEA 2023 include the following:

1. Insufficient financial resources to cover the various expenses
2. Difficulties in obtaining visas to enter Cameroon
3. Lack of financial involvement from the government
4. Lack of experience and training of the local team (ANJEC)
5. The delay in installing the logistical equipment, which had an impact on the timetable for the start of activities
6. The late availability of the event program
7. Political instabilities that hampered the participation of some countries, notably Gabon and Niger
8. Lack of financial involvement from donors and development partners

## PLEADINGS

In view of the difficulties identified, we would like MINPMEESA and MINJEC to:

1. Send correspondence to obtain administrative facilities and agreements for the headquarters of the Pan-African Council for Youth Entrepreneurship (COPEJ).
2. Facilitate courtesy visas for Council activities in Cameroon
3. Facilitate direct contact with technical and financial partners as part of activities aimed at training members of the Pan-African Council for Youth Entrepreneurship.
4. Make a financial commitment to support the Cameroon National Entrepreneurship Camp.
5. Engage in the preparation of the International Camp of Young African Entrepreneurs to be held in 2025 in TOGO or COMOROS.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

Several recommendations were made at the end of the conferences and training workshops:

1. Set up a federation to promote youth entrepreneurship in each country
2. Establish innovative financing mechanisms for young start-upers
3. Establish collaboration with partners (public and private)
4. Initiate and facilitate the process of obtaining the headquarters agreement for the Pan-African Council for Youth Entrepreneurship (COPEJ), in collaboration with ANJEC
5. Set up a support process and provide COPEJ with all the resources required for effective implementation
6. Set up a migration protocol to facilitate the obtaining of entry visas in the various African countries where the CIJEA will be organized, and greater participation and involvement of the country designated to organize a CIJEA
7. Promote the local entrepreneurial ecosystem, to encourage the sharing of experiences, the collective resolution of challenges and the stimulation of innovation
8. Encourage policies favorable to young entrepreneurs, calling for government initiatives to create an environment more conducive to youth entrepreneurship, such as easier access to financing and tailored legal support
9. Ensure that the various reports are filed with all sectorial administrations in each country
10. Organization of national camps in each country
11. Follow-up of files for the organization of CIJEA II.





# FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN SCHOOLS

## ABOUT ME

PHUEBÉ KOTZINE BATOCHOU  
CAMEROON YMCA

## MY PROJECT

Concerning the project :  
fight against drugs and juvenile delinquency in schools, we therefore carried out a raid to raise awareness in a high school called : LYCÉE TECHNIQUE DE KIKI in the town of Bafia.

On the program we had :  
A round table on the theme “Consequences of Drug Consumption and Juvenile Delinquency in Schools” led by

- a high school guidance counselor
- a Doctor
- a young student
- and a spiritual elder.

In order to be able to effectively address this problem and resolve it.

We also showed testimonies from former drug addicts who also raised awareness by asking younger people to avoid this life and to concentrate on their studies. After our round table we had moments of discussion with the students and several young people found themselves in this drug situation and they said that they really want to leave everything. After magnificent moments of exchanges, testimonies and advice, we parted ways.

## MY EXPERIECES

Conclusion We can say that this awareness was raised because we had young people who gave up drugs and they were expected to go to the hospital for detoxification.

At the same time, we created an anti-drug club in this technical high school in Kiki and this group is led by former drug addicts with experience in this area.

So here is a summary of the project that we did and which went very well by the grace of God. THANKS !!





# YMCA

# LEADERS

## ABOUT ME

MARIANNA FIRMINO NOGUEIRA &  
VINICIUS PEREIRA DE AVILA  
YMCA SÃO PAULO

YMCA Leaders it is a leadership course aimed at young people between 13 and 25 years old, and its objective is to develop various social skills. It is a project in which several YMCAs from Latin America and the Caribbean participate.

Our project consisted of expanding the course beyond YMCA São Paulo, improving promotion, and revising the material.

With the support of Campus YMCA, responsible for the revision of the materials and the volunteers who participated as speakers in the units where the course was applied, we achieved a total of 130 graduates in the year 2023.





# VACACIONES

# FELICES

## ABOUT US

PÍA ZÚÑIGA OLVARES, 20  
& DIEGO SANDOVAL LANDABUR, 21  
YMCA VALPARAÍSO  
CHILE

## WHAT ARE WE DOING? AND WHY DO WE DO IT?

The focus of the Vacaciones Felices program is to take care of children and make them spend a more entertaining summer where they can develop more skills. We do it with the purpose of children arriving that their parents or guardians can not take care of throughout the day, or just for the reason that they want the children to have a different summer.

## WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN?

It's important for children since they advance during the program, they develop skills that perhaps they did not know they had such as communication or some soft skills, being a large group of children they can meet people of the same age, smaller or older, helping them to acquire the ability to lose communication with people whether they are their age or not.

The workshops that are taught we also believe that they help them a lot since we have all kinds, such as sports, cooking, languages, crafts and so they can know more about their own tastes; also during the week they have three outings (being a full-day outing on Friday) where we go to museums, parks, hills, swimming pools, making them become more aware of the environment or knowing more about the history of the country in which they live.

## **WHAT ROLE DO WE PLAY AS LEADERS?**

We as leaders play the role of caregiver or monitor, but we also believe that we play more of a friend role for children, so that they not only see a figure of authority in us but someone they can trust or talk to, since we spend the whole day with them and no one feels comfortable spending the whole day with unknown people.

Moving on to the subject of the workshops, they are the same leaders who are in charge of managing and carrying out them. At the time of doing the program, the two managers ask the leaders who will participate during the summer in the program, if they would like to do a workshop and if the answer is yes, what would it be? All this based on our own skills and if we feel confident and comfortable to do some kind of workshop.



## HOW DO WE PREPARE?

Being totally honest, we don't prepare much for the program. From time to time we have conferences on mental health, both in adults and children, but we can't get so deeply involved with them on those issues. We rely more on the experience we have and that we have acquired over the years, and if new people come to our leaders course and there is the situation that they want to participate as a monitor in Vacaciones Felices, it's the same leaders who tell them how to act in a situation or some children we already know.

And speaking of the structure itself of the program, each year two people are chosen to be in charge of "creating" the program and taking charge of them, becoming the "leading monitors". Within their jobs they enter, talk to the parents or guardians of the children, take

charge of the purchases of the materials, keep all the workshops organized and that everything goes well during these two months. All with the help of the other monitors.



# YMCA - GLOBAL GOOD IN ACTION



CVJM Bayern / YMCA Bavaria  
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