

## Y STORY OF THE MONTH

### **A Story of Strength—Sven Bell's Inspiring Journey**

If you're a local to Spruce Pine, North Carolina, you may already recognize the name. And if you're part of our Y community, you've likely seen Sven walking our halls, working hard on the wellness floor, or spending time in our facility with his family.

Originally from York Town, Virginia, Sven moved to Spruce Pine about four years ago to continue his long and accomplished career as a lineman. For nearly 25 years, he served as a subcontractor with a power company—until a tragic accident on February 5, 2025, changed everything.

Sven remembers that day clearly. Around 5:30 PM, his crew was working late, as so many were during the ongoing Hurricane Helene recovery efforts. As the day wrapped up, Sven ascended to finish framing a pole—something he had done thousands of times. In a split second, his life shifted. A surge of 12,800 volts of electricity tore through his body for more than 10 seconds. For context, that's one hundred times the energy required to power a household dryer. He was airlifted to Mission Hospital and then transferred to the Augusta Burn Center the next day, where an extraordinary fight for his life began—one the doctors would later describe simply as a miracle.



Pictured from left to right: Crystal Bell, Sven Bell

Despite the unimaginable force of the electrocution, Sven remained conscious and suffered no brain injury. But the burns were severe, and infection set in. His hands had to be amputated. He spent six weeks in a medically induced coma, losing 125 pounds in the process. "Everything I worked for my whole life was gone in seconds," he reflected. Yet even in the face of loss, Sven emerged with a renewed sense of purpose. After five long months in the hospital, he was discharged with a conviction that carried him forward. "God saved my life for a reason," he said. "So I'm going to do everything I can to figure out why I'm still here."

Fitness had always been part of Sven's life—morning workouts, evenings in the jiu-jitsu gym, years of discipline and strength. His surgeon later shared that Sven's active lifestyle likely contributed to his survival; his heart was conditioned, resilient, and able to withstand what should have been a fatal shock. And even in the hospital, his commitment to wellness surfaced quickly. His wife, Crystal, who stayed faithfully by his side every single day, remembers the first question he asked when waking from his coma: "How long have I been out of the gym?" So it came as no surprise that, as soon as he returned home, Sven was determined to get back to being active.

Three months ago, Sven and his family joined our Y—seeking a space for healing, strength,

and togetherness. What they found was not just a gym, but a community ready to walk alongside them.

Though less than a year has passed since the accident, Sven has already become a source of inspiration to everyone who crosses his path. He often shares a lesson he wishes he'd never had to learn the hard way: "Complacency kills." It's a phrase he heard throughout his career, but one that carries a weight he now understands deeply.

Today, Sven is choosing to live not with complacency, but with resilience, determination, purpose, and gratitude for every day he gets to pursue the reason he believes he was saved. If you see Sven around the Y, be sure to say hello. We are honored to have him as part of our Y family.

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## A Letter From our Executive Director

On October 31, we had the pleasure of welcoming our 3,000th member — a milestone that came sooner than we expected! I want to take a moment to thank our members and community for helping make this achievement possible.

At the A.M.Y. Wellness Foundation YMCA, we take pride in offering a welcoming, clean, and community-minded facility. Recently, while walking through the Y, a member stopped me to share how much he appreciated the encouragement and motivation he received from his personal trainer. He told me he actually enjoys coming to the Y now! We've also received many kind emails recognizing our membership team for being friendly and helpful, along with other notes expressing how much our members value their experiences here.

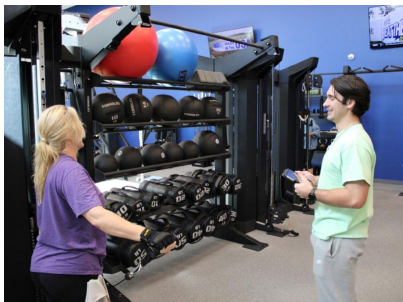
As we move into the holiday season, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of you for being part of our Y family. Please travel safely as winter approaches — we'll continue to do our best to stay open and welcome you each day.

From all of us at the A.M.Y. Wellness Foundation YMCA, we wish you a joyful and healthy holiday season.

-Bill Hoag, Branch Executive Director

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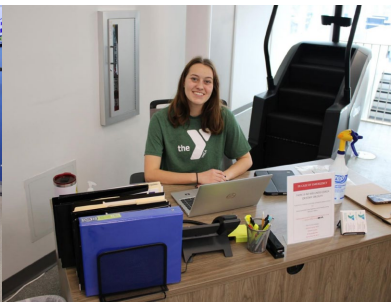
## What's Happening



### Shoutout to our Personal Trainers!

We want to recognize our incredible personal trainers, Dalton Towe and Eve Moore, for their hard work and service to our Y community! We're so fortunate to have them supporting our members on their wellness journeys.

*Interested in personal*



### Another Shoutout— Thank You to our Wellness Coaches

In addition to celebrating our Personal Trainers, this month we're reflecting on how grateful we are for our dedicated Wellness Coaches —each one passionate about supporting the health and well-being of our community. Our Mitchell Healthy Living Director, Jessica Thomas,



### Student-Staff Connections at After School

"When you have as many new hires as we do here in the Mitchell After School Program it is fantastic to see the bonds that form between the staff and students. While visiting the After School sites it always warms my heart to see the students come in to the program and be excited

*training?* Dalton and Eve are available Monday–Friday during mid-day hours (10:00 AM–3:00 PM). Although mornings fill up fast, they're more than willing to help you find a session time that works for you.

Visit anyone on our wellness floor to inquire about packages, pricing, and availability.

would like to recognize Kim Williams, Dalton Towe, Bobby Tolbert, Patricia Noser, Linda Nelson, Corey Robinson, Eve Moore, Robert Zenon (who also supports our Membership Desk), and our newest addition, Katryn Pippert.

We are fortunate to have such an exceptional wellness team working hard to keep the wellness floor clean, welcoming, and well-run.

They provide guidance, equipment orientations, and a friendly presence to ensure a smooth and safe experience for both members and guests. When you see them on the wellness floor, please take a moment to share your appreciation for all they do.

to see the staff. As the students get up to go hug the staff and have a happy look on their faces they immediately respond with kind words and a smile. More than one staff member has said that even if their day has been stressful that kind of reaction always makes them feel good."

-Burt Blakenship, Mitchell Youth Development Director



### Attention After School Parents!

Dear Parents of After School, thank you so much for participating in our Parent Survey! Your feedback is invaluable and helps us make our program even better for your children. We would love to hear from more families, so please keep an eye out for an email with the survey link.

If you've already completed the survey, thank you! No further action is needed.

Your voice truly makes a difference—thank you for helping us grow!

*NOTE: We will not have After School December 19th-January 5th. we will resume After School on January 6th.*

### Aquatics Updates

This month at the pool has been a blast. We've had a lot of things going on, and the energy has been great.

Private swim lessons with Sam and Faith are officially underway, and group lessons are running smoothly on the first and third Fridays of each month. Our adult swim group continues to grow, and it's been exciting to see everyone improving week after week. Water aerobics continues to be a success, and we're excited to welcome a couple of new instructors to the team.

*A couple of quick updates on what's coming up:*

- Our new kayak program will now officially be held on the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 PM

### Branch War Food Drive WINNERS

If you've been following us on social media or spotted the signs in our lobbies, you might have noticed some friendly rivalry heating up between our Mitchell and Avery branches! Both teams were competing to see who could collect the most food for local food banks this Thanksgiving—and what a success it was!

Over just two weeks, our amazing staff and members donated nearly **700 pounds of food**—enough to help local food banks provide Avery and Mitchell families a proper Thanksgiving meal. Out of that, 496.5 pounds were contributed specifically by the A.M.Y. Wellness Foundation YMCA of Mitchell County! Your generosity truly made an impact.

- We're also planning to add a Wednesday afternoon water aerobics class with Delaney Sproles.

Things are going great, and we're growing more every week.

A huge shoutout to our incredible Community Health Worker, Anabel Zayas, for organizing and driving this effort—thank you for making it all happen!



### Looking for the Perfect Gift This Holiday Season?

The A.M.Y. Wellness Foundation YMCA of Mitchell County is offering Holiday Gift Certificates—purchasable in any amount you like. These can be used for YMCA gear (sweatshirts, t-shirts, swim caps, fleece jackets, etc.), membership fees, personal training, swim lessons, etc. If you're interested in purchasing a gift card for your loved one this holiday season, please visit us at the Membership Desk.

## Mark Your Calendars



### NEW Group Exercise Class in December!

Join us on **Thursdays at 4:00 PM** in Room 108 for **Barre!**

*What is Barre?*

It's a full-body workout that incorporates challenging movements, light weights, and quick transitions. It blends elements of Ballet, Pilates, and strength training, often adding cardio intervals to increase intensity. Participants should expect a focus on form while using props like weights, balls, and resistance bands.



### December Wellness Challenge: The 12 Days of Christmas

Come out this month and join us for a holiday challenge!

This was suggested and created by one of our Monster Mash winners—so you *know* it's going to be good!

**Challenge Dates:**  
All month until Christmas!

Join us for 12 fun, festive, and challenging workouts! Participate at your own pace, track your progress, and complete all 12



### Holiday Hours

In honor of Christmas, the Mitchell YMCA will be **closed Dec. 24-Dec. 26!** Additionally, please note that we will be **closing at 5:00 PM on Dec. 31,** and **reopening at 8:00 AM on Jan. 1** in observance of New Year's.

The wellness floor will be accessible only to those with 24/7 Access during these closures. If you want to use the facility during this period, sign up for 24/7 Access by visiting our Membership Desk.

Please wear non-slip/grippy socks to class.

workouts before Christmas to earn an entry into a drawing for special **YMCA 12-for-12 Finisher Prizes!**

For more information on 24/7 Access, click the button below.

*Visit the Wellness Desk to pick up the list of workouts and your tracking sheet.*

[24/7 Access Info](#)



### Join us for our 16th Annual Reindeer Run!

Join us on **Saturday, December 6th from 8:00 AM-11:00 AM**, for our Annual Reindeer Run 5k! We will start at Tate Evans Park in Banner Elk. This race is for everyone - bring the whole family! You may run, jog or walk the course - whichever you choose. The race starts at 9:00 AM. Check in and refreshments will be available at 8:00 AM.

**Late registration will be accepted until the race begins!**

All proceeds from the race go towards the YMCA's Y Access program. At the Y, no one is turned away because of an inability to pay. We offer the Y Access program providing financial assistance based on household income and size, and review special circumstances like medical expenses and unplanned emergencies. Financial assistance is made available through the Y's Annual Campaign and grants from generous donors.

#### **Thank you to our Event Sponsors:**

Beech Mountain Resorts  
Town of Banner Elk TDA

#### **Late Registration Costs:**

Late Adult Registration: \$35.00  
Late Registration (6 y/o - 11 y/o): \$25.00  
Late Child Registration: \$0.00

[Late Adult Registration](#)

Late Youth Registration

Late Child Registration

# December Schedules

## December Group Exercise Schedule



### December Group Exercise and Healthy Living Schedule-Mitchell

| Monday   | Tuesday  |                                 | Wednesday  | Thursday  |                                 | Friday  | Saturday                          |
|--|--|---------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | 7:00 Sunrise Yoga<br>Belinda<br>*Room 109                            |                                 | <b>**Closed Wed Dec 24*</b>  | <b>**Closed Thurs. Dec 25th</b>                                     |                                 | <b>**Closed Fri. Dec 26th</b>                                     |                                   |
| 9:00 Move & Tone<br>Carolyn<br>**Room 109<br><b>*No Class 12/1 or 12/8</b> | 9:00 ReFit<br>Morgan<br>*Room 108                                    | 9:00 Water<br>Aerobics<br>*Pool | 9:00 Move & Tone<br>Carolyn<br>*Room 108<br><b>*No Class 12/17</b> | 9:00 ReFit<br>Morgan<br>*Room 108                                   | 9:00 Water<br>Aerobics<br>*Pool | 9:00 Move & Tone<br>Carolyn<br>*Room 108                          | 9:00 ReFit<br>Morgan<br>*Room 108 |
| 10:00 Enhance Fitness<br>*Room 108<br><b>*Registration closed</b>          |  |                                 | 10:00 Enhance Fitness<br>* Room 108<br><b>*Registration closed</b> | 10:00 All Levels Yoga<br>Belinda<br>*Room 109                       |                                 | 10:00 Enhance Fitness<br>*Room 108<br><b>*Registration closed</b> |                                   |
| 11:00 Vinyasa Yoga<br>Maria<br>*Room 109                                   | 11: 00 Delay the Disease<br>*Room 108<br><b>By registration only</b> |                                 | 11:00 Chair Yoga<br>Nichole<br>*Room 109                           | 11:00 Delay the Disease<br>*Room 108<br><b>By registration only</b> |                                 |   |                                   |
|  | 12:00 Mat Pilates<br>Maureen<br>*Room 109                            |                                 |  | 12:00 PiYO<br>Whitney<br>Room 108                                   |                                 | 12:00 Interval Strength<br>Training<br>Joe<br>*Room 109           |                                   |
|  |  |                                 | 4:30 Yoga Sculpt<br>Maria<br>*Room 108                             | <b>**New Class--4:00 Barre</b><br>Dallia<br>*Room 108               |                                 |   |                                   |
| 6:00 Zumba<br>Sarah<br>*Room 108   | 6:00 All Levels Yoga<br>Belinda<br>*Room 109                         |                                 |  | 6:00 Zumba<br>Sarah<br>*Room 108                                    |                                 |   |                                   |

To find an up-close view of the calendar, and for descriptions of each class, click below.

Group Exercise Schedule

## December Aquatics Schedule

| DECEMBER 2025 AQUATICS CLASS OFFERINGS AND PROGRAM DETAILS |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
|--|--------|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------|
|  | Sunday | Monday  | Tuesday   | Wednesday                         | Thursday  | Friday                            | Saturday   |                      |
|  |        |   | Private Swim Lessons -<br>Registration Required -<br>30 minutes throughout<br>the day - Cost and<br>Scheduling Online |                                   | Private Swim Lessons -<br>Registration Required -<br>30 minutes throughout<br>the day - Cost and<br>Scheduling Online |                                   |  |                      |
| 5:00 AM  | CLOSED | CLOSED  |   |                                   |   |                                   | CLOSED   |                      |
| 6:00 AM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 7:00 AM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 8:00 AM  |        | Adult Swim Group<br>Registration Required<br>\$10/month member<br>\$20/month non-member |   |                                   | Adult Swim Group<br>Registration Required<br>\$10/month member<br>\$20/month non-member                               |                                   | Adult Swim Group<br>Registration Required<br>\$10/month member<br>\$20/month non-member  |                      |
| 9:00 AM  |        |   |   | Water Aerobics - 20<br>person cap |   | Water Aerobics - 20<br>person cap |  |                      |
| 10:00 AM   |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 11:00 AM   |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  | Potential Pool Party |
| 12:00 PM   |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 1:00 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 1:30 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  | Potential Pool Party |
| 2:00 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 3:00 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 3:30 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 3:45 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 4:00 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   | Group Swim Lessons<br>Beginner 1st & 3rd<br>Fridays 3:45 - 4:30<br>Registration Required<br>\$10/month member<br>\$20/month non-member     | CLOSED               |
| 4:30 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   | Group Swim Lessons<br>Intermediate 1st & 3rd<br>Fridays 4:30 - 5:15<br>Registration Required<br>\$10/month member<br>\$20/month non-member |                      |
| 5:00 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 5:15 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 5:30 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 6:00 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 7:00 PM  |        |   | Kayak Roll Session - 1st<br>Tuesday only - Free for<br>Members; \$3 for non-<br>members                               |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |
| 8:00 PM  |        |   |   |                                   |   |                                   |  |                      |

To find an up-close view of the calendar, and for descriptions of each class, click below.

[Aquatics Schedule](#)

## Giving Back

Do you want to be part of the change and give back to the Mitchell County community? There are a variety of ways you can get involved with the A.M.Y. Wellness Foundation YMCA of Mitchell County!

### Giving Tuesday is December 2!

At the A.M.Y Wellness Foundation YMCA of Mitchell County everyday we see lives changed—drowning prevention programs, outreach services addressing social isolation and food insecurity, afterschool and summer camp programs that help youth find new and exciting ways to learn and connect with their peers, and Healthy Living programs that help those living with chronic diseases manage their symptoms. None of this happens without you.

**If the Y has made a difference in your life, we invite you to give this Giving Tuesday!**

Your support—big or small—creates opportunities, builds community, and helps every person learn, grow, and thrive.

[DONATE](#)

Looking for other ways to give back to the Y? Give the gift of your time and skills in programs that change the lives of children, teens, adults, families, and seniors.

[VOLUNTEER](#)



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Connect with us on:



A.M.Y. Wellness Foundation YMCA of Mitchell County | [97 Pinebridge Ave, Spruce Pine, NC 28777](#)

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