



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## Y STORY OF THE MONTH

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### **From 'Anywhere' to Avery County: Abby Barber's Journey**

Although she may be a newer face at the Y, it didn't take long for Abby Barber to feel like someone who had always belonged here. Maybe you've spotted her on the wellness floor offering encouragement, or lending a steady, welcoming presence in one of our Healthy Living programs. However you've crossed paths with her, one thing is clear—Abby brings heart, purpose, and quiet strength into every space she serves.



Pictured (from left to right): Abby Barber, Kent Barber

Abby's story doesn't begin in one place. Originally from Culpeper, Virginia, she often laughs and says she's really from "all over." She attended Cedarville University in Ohio, a Christian university with a strong mission focus. It was there that Abby felt a clear calling toward service beyond herself. She remembers a simple but powerful prayer: *"God, I am willing to go anywhere you'd send me."*

That willingness soon became a way of life. After college, Abby began working with Samaritan's Purse, a Christian humanitarian aid organization founded by Franklin Graham. While serving wounded veterans and their spouses in Alaska, she met Kent—who would later become her husband. Together, they built a rhythm of service, spending summers in Alaska and winters in Florida, continuing their work in the mission field side by side.

During one season in Florida, Abby began looking for a job to help support their mission work. Health and wellness had always been a passion, and after a few visits to their local YMCA in Jacksonville, Kent encouraged her to reach out about a part-time position. To her surprise, Abby was offered a role as assistant to the Healthy Living Director to help create and manage programs that served the community in meaningful ways. What she thought would be temporary became transformational. "It was just a little email I sent off," Abby reflected, "not even dreaming of what my role at the Y would become. It was a total God thing."

When Hurricane Helene impacted Western North Carolina in 2024, Abby and Kent once again felt that familiar call to go where they were needed. They moved to the area to support long-term recovery efforts with Samaritan's Purse, helping to rebuild homes for families affected by the storm. When they arrived, Abby quickly made a call to the closest Y—the Williams YMCA of Avery County.

At our Y, Abby has transitioned from behind the scenes to more of a hands-on leader. From working on the wellness floor and personal training, to supporting programs like Moving Mountains with Parkinson's and EnhanceFitness, she brings compassion, energy, and purpose into everything she does.

Abby says she has found her passion at the Y, and we are grateful she has found her way here. When you see her around the facility, take a moment to say hello—you'll quickly understand why her presence has already made such a meaningful impact.

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# What's Happening



## Fueling Our Mission: Your 2025 Impact

As we kick off the new year we are reflecting on all of the amazing things we accomplished in 2025, including the support from our Donors, Volunteers, and Community Partners! As of early December 2025 we raised almost \$3 million through grants, over \$337,000 through the YMCA Annual Campaign and had more than \$100,000 of In-kind donations. All of this funding goes right back into the programs and services we offer at our YMCAs in Avery and Mitchell County supporting access for all, community connection, drowning prevention, after school and out-of-school support, daycare needs, and so much more!

Thank you to everyone who supported our YMCA mission in 2025, we can't wait to see what we can accomplish in 2026!



## Athletics Updates

We're excited to share that our Athletics Department is under new leadership, with a familiar and trusted face stepping into the role. **Faith Boyette**, who many of our members already know from the pool as our Aquatics Director, is now also undertaking leadership of Athletics, expanding her impact across multiple program areas.

Faith brings proven experience, passion, and a strong commitment to youth development to both departments. Her leadership in aquatics has been marked by energy, organization, and a genuine care for participants, and we're confident those same strengths will continue to elevate our athletics programs. We're thrilled to see both Aquatics and Athletics grow under Faith's guidance and excited for what's ahead.

*As for programming, Spring Soccer, Homeschool PE, and Spring Spirit registration has gone live as of today, January 1. Keep an eye out on social media for updated program dates and registration links.*



## Hugh Chapman Early Learning Center Accepting ALL Children!

At Hugh Chapman Early Learning Center, we are dedicated to serving ALL children, creating a welcoming, inclusive environment where every child ages 2-5 can learn, grow, and thrive.

Our commitment to high-quality early education continues through ongoing professional development for our staff. In December, our team participated in specialized training focused on incorporating math concepts into early childhood classrooms, ensuring children build strong foundational skills through engaging, age-appropriate learning experiences.

**Hugh Chapman Early Learning Center is currently accepting all children ages 2-5.** To learn more or enroll, please contact Jess Sullins, Early Learning Center Director, via email below or at 828-737-5500 ext. 341.

[Email Jess](#)



## A Semester of Fun, Friends and Learning!

"As we wrap up the first semester of the After School Program, I want to share how truly wonderful these past few months have been.

Our students have grown academically, socially, and emotionally—and we've had a fantastic time along the way. Throughout the holiday season, our groups enjoyed creative crafts, exciting STEM projects, and plenty of delicious snacks to celebrate together.

Looking ahead to the New Year, our resolution is simple: even more academic growth, even more fun, and even more friendships. We are excited to continue building a program that supports our students in every way.

I also want to take a moment to celebrate our incredible Site Leads and Counselors. Their dedication, leadership, and genuine care for our students make After School a fun, encouraging, and safe environment for all Avery County children. We recently honored them with a Christmas party, where—true to form—one of our games turned into a STEM activity inspired by a project their students loved. Their creativity and passion shine through everything they do.

After School is more than a program—it is a family. One moment from this semester that truly reflects our YMCA core values occurred when one of our students became very sick and had to spend several weeks in the hospital. His classmates missed him dearly and wanted to do something special, so they each made a heartfelt "Get Well" card. Our Site Lead, along with the Youth Directors, helped put together a care basket filled with the cards and a few of his favorite things. When he returned to After School a few days later, he was greeted with smiles, excitement, and the biggest group hug from his friends. It was a beautiful reminder of the love, support, and community that make this program so special.

Thank you to our students, families, and staff for contributing to such a meaningful first



## Meet Steve Thomas

If you frequently come to the Williams YMCA during the morning hours, chances are you've seen Steve Thomas. Since September 2025, Steve has made the Y a regular part of his routine, committed to improving his health and increasing his mobility.

Living with type 2 diabetes, degenerative disc disease, and after undergoing two hip replacements, Steve knows firsthand that progress doesn't come easily. Still, his outlook remains strong. As he often says, *"It doesn't matter how many times you get knocked down—when you get back up, stay moving forward."* And that's exactly what Steve continues to do.

In October, Steve fell from a ladder, and in November, he was involved in a minor car accident. While both incidents left him sore, he walked away without serious injury. Steve truly believes that the strength, balance, and resilience he's gained at the YMCA played a major role in his recovery. He's confident that without the work he's been doing here, the outcome could have been much worse.

So what keeps Steve coming back, even on the days it feels hard? Community. Steve has found encouragement and support within these walls—from staff he describes as "rays of sunshine" to fellow members who have become friends. One of his earliest visits left a lasting impression when a fellow member simply stopped to tell him that God loves him.

Steve admits that some days he doesn't feel like coming, but he shows up anyway—because he knows that 90% of the battle is just getting here. His story is a powerful reminder that at the Y, transformation is about more than physical strength; it's about perseverance, connection, and moving forward together.

semester. We can't wait to see what the rest of the school year brings!"

-Skylar Sudhoff, Avery Youth Development Director

## Mark Your Calendars



### 2026 Aquatics Programming Updates

With the new year has come a few aquatics updates!

Group swim lessons are now offered on **Monday, Wednesday, or Friday:**

**Ages 3-4:** 3:00-3:45 PM  
**Ages 5-6:** 3:45-4:30 PM  
**Ages 7-8+:** 4:30-5:15 PM

**Parent & Me** lessons will continue on **Saturday mornings, 9:00 AM-9:45 AM.**

Private swim lessons remain available, now on **Tuesday and Thursday afternoons**, with limited morning spots.

Be sure to watch for any other updates in aquatics programming this new year!



### 2026 Healthy Living Programs

**Blood Pressure Self Monitoring Program:**  
January 5th - April 24th  
Mondays and Fridays 8:15 AM- 9:45 AM. Contact Katie Willet for more information.

*NOTE: We now have a Healthy Heart Ambassador who is bilingual and will be helping us make a greater impact.*

[Email Katie](#)

**EnhanceFitness:**  
January 5th - April 24th  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00 AM- 11:00 AM. Contact Chris Kennedy for more information.

[Email Chris](#)

### Moving Mountains With Parkinsons:

January 6th - March 26th,  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
10:00 AM-11:00 AM.  
Contact Deana Acklin for more information. *NOTE: registration for this program stays open year-round.*

[Email Deana](#)



### YMCA's Weight Loss Program to launch January 6th!

Looking for a way to jump start your healthy journey this new year?

Join us for our YMCA Weight Loss Program—a **12-week** program designed to help people seeking a healthier weight achieve their goals by making small, modest changes to their daily behaviors, and forming sustainable healthy habits and impactful lifestyle change.

When? Tuesdays from 5:30 PM-6:30 PM

Cost is \$60 for members and \$80 for non-members.

Sign up TODAY by clicking the link below.

[Weight Loss Registration](#)

**LIVESTRONG:**

February 2nd - April 22nd,  
Mondays and Wednesdays  
1:00 PM-2:30 PM. Contact  
Chris Kennedy for more  
information.

[Email Chris](#)

**Pay the Day Promotion!**

It's our **January "Pay the Day" Promotion** at the Y!  
The day you join is the price you pay for the rest of the month, and *joining fees are completely waived.*

Join January 12? Pay \$12.  
Join January 20? Pay \$20.

It's the perfect time to jump in, get moving, and start building healthy habits without the upfront cost.

Don't wait—**standard rates return in February.** Tell your friends and family, and let's start the year strong together at the Y!

**January Schedules**

**January Group Exercise Schedule**

**JANUARY GROUP FITNESS**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5:30 am		<b>BODYPUMP</b> Tyler		<b>BODYPUMP</b> Eva		No Spin on January 5 <sup>th</sup> and 24 <sup>th</sup>
7:30am	Hatha Yoga Sarah 		Hatha Yoga Sarah		Hatha Yoga Sarah	
8:30 am	Stretch, Tone, Balance-Sheila <b>Blackburn GYM B</b>	<b>ACTIVE</b> Sheila	Stretch, Tone, Balance- Sheila <b>Blackburn GYM B</b>	<b>ACTIVE</b> Edie	Stretch, Tone & Balance – Sheila <b>Blackburn GYM B</b>	
9:00 am	<b>Water Fit</b> Genevieve		<b>Water Fit</b> Genevieve	Think of all the beauty left around you and be Happy	<b>Water Fit</b> Genevieve	Spin Aleisa
9:45am	<b>DDPY</b> Lisa	Alignment Yoga Carol Ann	Yoga Sculpt Chris	Flow Yoga Jocelyn	<b>DDPY</b> Lisa	<p><b>Saturday</b></p> <p><b>POP UP</b></p> <p><b>Classes Jan. 10<sup>th</sup></b></p> <p><b>Jan 24<sup>th</sup></b></p> <p><b>Pilates</b></p> <p><b>With Lilly</b></p> <p><b>9:00AM-10:00AM</b></p> <p><b>Followed By</b></p> <p><b>Flow Yoga</b></p> <p><b>10:30AM-11:30AM</b></p>
11:00 am		Qigong/Tai Chi Carol Ann			Dance Fit Kim	
12:00 pm	<b>BODYPUMP</b> Bonnie	<b>BODYATTACK</b> Bonnie	<b>BODYPUMP</b> Teresa		<b>BODYPUMP</b> Kathleen	
2:00pm	<b>Water Fit</b> Lucy		<b>Water Fit</b> Lucy		<b>Water Fit</b> Lucy	
5:00pm		Spin Fusion Vanessa		Spin Fusion Vanessa		
5:30pm	Spin Aleisa					
5:30 pm	<b>Pilates</b> Lilly	Barre Shannon <b>Water Fit (Lucy)</b>	<b>DDPY</b> Lisa	<b>ACTIVE</b> Sheila <b>Water Fit (Lucy)</b>	<b>Pilates</b> Lilly	

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

**Group Exercise Schedule**

**January Aquatics Schedule**

January Aquatics Schedule						
	Lap lane 1	Lap lane 2	Lap lane 3	Lap lane 4	Lap lane 5	Kid Area
7:00 AM	First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	Open Swim
8:00 AM				First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	
9:00 AM				Reserved for Water fit Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8a-10a	Reserved for Water fit Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8a-10a	
10:00 AM				First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	
11:00 AM				First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	
12:00 PM				First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	
1:00 PM				First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	
2:00 PM	Reserved for Aquatics Programs					
3:00 PM	Water Fit	Monday, Wednesday, Friday 2:00-3:00		Avery Highschool Swim Team Practice		
4:00 PM						
5:00 PM	Water Fit	Tuesday & Thursdays 5:30-6:30				
6:00 PM				First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	
7:00 PM	Open swim	Open swim	Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	First come first serve/Open swim	
8:00 PM	Closed					

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

**Aquatics Schedule**

**January Athletics Schedule(s)**



# Blackburn Athletic Facility January 2026 Schedule

	MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
	GYM A	GYM B	GYM A	GYM B	GYM A	GYM B	GYM A	GYM B	GYM A	GYM B	GYM A	GYM B
8 AM	Open Gym	Stretch, Tone, & Balance 8:30 - 9:30 am	Open Gym		Open Gym	Stretch, Tone, & Balance 8:30 - 9:30 am	Open Gym		Open Gym	Stretch, Tone, & Balance 8:30 - 9:30 am	Open Gym	
9 AM	Pickleball 9:30 - 11:30 am	Enhance fitness 10 am - 11 am	Pickleball 9:30 - 11:30 am	Open Gym	Pickleball 9:30 - 11:30 am	Enhance fitness 10 am - 11 am	Pickleball 9:30 - 11:30 am	Open Gym	Pickleball 9:30 - 11:30 am	Enhance fitness 10 am - 11 am	Pickleball 9:30 - 11:30 am	Open Gym
10 AM												
11 AM												
12 AM												
1 PM												
2 PM												
3 PM												
4 PM												
5 PM			Indoor Soccer* U12 5:30 - 6:30 pm	Indoor Soccer* U6 5 - 6 pm								
6 PM				Indoor Soccer* U12 6-7 pm	Pickleball 9:30 - 11:30 am	Gym Reservations 6:30 - 7:30 pm						
7 PM			Open Gym	Open Gym								
8 PM	Close at 8 PM											



# O'Connell Field House January 2026 Schedule

	MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
	Golf Simulators	Bating Cages	Golf Simulators	Bating Cages	Golf Simulators	Bating Cages	Golf Simulators	Bating Cages	Golf Simulators	Bating Cages	Golf Simulators	Bating Cages
8 AM												
9 AM												
10 AM												
11 AM												
12 AM												
1 PM	Reservation Required 8:30 am - 7 pm	Reservation Required 8:30 am - 7 pm	Reservation Required 8:30 am - 7 pm		Reservation Required 8:30 am - 7 pm		Reservation Required 8:30 am - 7 pm		Reservation Required 8:30 am - 7 pm	Reservation Required 8:30 am - 7 pm	Reservation Required 8:30 am - 3 pm	
2 PM												
3 PM												
4 PM												
5 PM				Avery Baseball 3:30 pm - 5 pm								
6 PM												
7 PM				Reservation Required 6 pm - 7 pm								
8 PM	Close at 8 PM											

To find an up-close view of the calendar, click below.

[Athletics Schedule\(s\)](#)

## Giving Back

Do you want to be part of the Y movement and give back to the Avery County community? There are a variety of ways you can get involved with the Williams YMCA of Avery County!

At the Y, 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 an impact in your life, we want to invite you to give!**

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

[DONATE](#)

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*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](#)



Connect with us on:



Williams YMCA of Avery County | 436 Hospital Drive, Linville, NC 28646

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