



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Y STORY OF THE MONTH

From the Florida Keys to the Pool Deck: Meet Matt Miller

If the aquatics area is one of your favorite places in our facility, chances are you've seen this familiar face. But behind the lifeguard stand is a story shaped by water, service, and a lifetime of experiences. Meet Matt Miller, the heart and soul of our Mauzy Aquatics Center.

Although Matt was born in Ohio, it was the Florida Keys that truly raised him. He was surrounded by island life and open water—an upbringing he fondly describes as “unique.” In the Keys, water wasn't just recreation; it was a way of life. Matt grew up boating to and from school, and spending many days swimming, fishing, water skiing, and diving. Simply put—water has always been central to Matt's life.



At just 18 years old, in January of 1979, Matt chose a path of service by enlisting in the U.S. Navy. He was stationed in Milton, Florida for three and a half years before serving aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower with the E-2C Hawkeyes, Squadron VAW 121. His time in the Navy strengthened his sense of teamwork, discipline, and dedication—qualities that would guide him well beyond his military career.

After years of active duty, he continued his service in the Naval Reserves. During that time, Matt's parents relocated to a small mountain town called Spruce Pine, North Carolina—perhaps you've heard of it? What was intended as a temporary visit by Matt to the mountains after getting out of active duty quickly became something more. After getting a job at Baxter (a local facility that manufactures healthcare equipment), Matt met his wife, and together they built a love story in Western North Carolina—raising two children and now enjoying the joy of four grandchildren.

Following a final transfer to the National Guard, Matt retired from military service in 2010. He officially wrapped up his professional career in 2017 after retiring from Baxter. Since then, his days have been filled with carpentry projects, helping with odd jobs, and—most importantly—spending time with his grandbabies.

Because Matt loves people just as much as he loves the water, it didn't take long for him to find his place at the A.M.Y. Wellness Foundation YMCA of Mitchell County. Joining our aquatics team as a lifeguard felt like a natural fit. When asked about his favorite part of the job, Matt shared that helping with swim meets has quickly become a highlight. “I love seeing the kids competing,” he says. “I'm all about kids—that's kind of my thing.”

Matt's impact is felt every single day at our Y. His servant's heart, welcoming spirit, and genuine care for everyone who walks through our doors truly embody the YMCA mission. If you see Matt around the Mauzy Aquatics Center, be sure to say hello—and don't forget to thank him for all that he does to keep our community safe, supported, and smiling.

A Letter From our Executive Director

I want to begin our January newsletter by extending my deepest gratitude to each of our members for choosing to be part of the AMY Wellness Foundation YMCA of Mitchell County.

This holiday season invited us to pause, reflect, and express appreciation for those who make a true difference in our lives. Our members are the heart of this organization—you are the reason our facility feels so vibrant, welcoming, and truly amazing. It is a place where people genuinely want to work and spend their time, and that spirit comes directly from you. I am continually grateful for the feedback you share and for the meaningful conversations we have about life, wellness, and everything in between. Your input helps us grow and strengthen our community every day.

I also want to give a heartfelt thank-you to our incredible team members. I regularly hear compliments about the warmth, professionalism, and dedication you bring to your work. We have an outstanding team, and I couldn't be prouder of the care and positivity you provide to everyone who walks through our doors.

I hope you all enjoyed a joyful Christmas and a wonderful holiday season filled with cherished moments alongside family and friends, and I am looking forward to a bright new year.

-Bill Hoag, Branch Executive Director

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!



A Growing Reader in Our After School Program

"Watching the young students in our After School Program is always a joy, and this month I had the privilege of spending time reading with several of them. One student in particular stood out. As I listened to her read, I couldn't help but think back to when she first joined the program last year. At that time, she would only look at the pictures—reading the words felt too overwhelming.

This year, she's not only reading the book, but also discussing the story as she goes. When she finished, I told her how fantastic she did. She smiled, said "thank you," and when I asked how she learned to read so well, her answer was simple: "I



History Made in Aquatics!

For the first time in Spruce Pine history, the Mauzy Family Aquatic Center proudly hosted a high school swim meet—an exciting milestone for a community that has long been limited in aquatic facilities and resources. With the help of our new Colorado Timing System, the meet ran with professional-level accuracy and efficiency, giving athletes an exceptional competitive experience right here at home.

We witnessed incredible races, impressive times, and a facility that truly shined. Even more inspiring was the turnout—families, friends, and community members filled the stands, coming together to cheer on our local

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

like the books in After School, and the teachers helped me a lot."
Her progress is a powerful reminder of the difference our staff and programs make every day."

-Burt Blankenship, Mitchell Youth Development Director

*PLEASE NOTE: The After School program will resume After School on **January 6th.***

swimmers and celebrate the growth of aquatic sports in our region.

This meet marks only the beginning—**we will be holding another meet on Jan. 8!** We look forward to expanding competitive opportunities, strengthening community connections, and continuing to elevate what our aquatic center can offer.



Enhance Fitness Making an Impact

Our most recent session of **EnhanceFitness** wrapped up in December with post-assessments and participant evaluations—the feedback spoke volumes about the impact of this program.

Participants shared how meaningful the experience has been, with comments like, "So thankful for the Y," and "I enjoyed the class tremendously. I feel it's important to continue to be physically active."

One participant shared a powerful reflection after returning from a holiday trip to Europe, noting how the program directly improved their confidence and mobility:

"Thank you to the Y for providing the EnhanceFitness class. I recently traveled to see Christmas markets in Europe, where the cobblestone streets were difficult to navigate. I did great! My balance was much better than some of the people I traveled with. I was able to walk for hours without fear of falling, and I truly credit the exercises we



Did You Complete Last Month's Wellness Challenge?

If you competed in our December Wellness Challenge: 12 days of Christmas, results are still coming in!

Once we get all completed forms we will reach out to the participants who completed the challenge to claim your prize!

We want to say thank you to everyone who has participated in our challenges these past few months. It is our hope that you not only enjoy these challenges, but that you build connections and community with other members and Y staff.

For more information on our January Wellness Challenge, see the "Mark Your Calendars" section below.



Group Exercise is GROWING

"As the year comes to a close, it's always meaningful to pause and reflect on the journey that brought us to where we are today. As the Healthy Living Director, one of my greatest responsibilities—and joys—has been building a group exercise schedule that serves our community. I've been continually amazed by the talented, passionate instructors who have stepped forward to share their expertise, and I'm excited to collaborate with even more in the year ahead.

When we first moved into the Healthy Living Center in August, our schedule included just three classes—Refit, Zumba, and Move & Tone. Since then, we've grown tremendously, adding nine new group exercise classes: Mat Pilates, Sunrise Yoga, All Levels Yoga, Vinyasa, Chair Yoga, Yoga Sculpt, Piyo, Strength Interval Training, and Barre. And we're not stopping there—plans are already in place to add two to three more classes in the early months of 2026.

did in class. Thank you again!"

Stories like these highlight how EnhanceFitness goes beyond exercise—helping participants build strength, balance, and confidence for everyday life.

The next EnhanceFitness class will be offered in **May 2026**, with registration opening in **April**.

If you are interested, or know someone who might be eligible due to arthritis or limited mobility, please contact the Healthy Living Director, Jessica Thomas by email below or call 828-520-9101 to be added to the interest list.

[Email Jessica](#)

If you haven't tried a group exercise class yet, I encourage you to grab a schedule and give one a try. We truly offer something for everyone, with options for all abilities—whether seated, standing, or in the water. And if you're already a regular participant, thank you! Your energy and commitment help make these classes such a special part of our Y community.

Be sure to follow us on social media and check our website for the latest updates on current and upcoming classes—we can't wait to keep moving together in the new year."

-Jessica Thomas, Mitchell Healthy Living Director



Membership Update

As we head into a busy January, our Membership Team is preparing to welcome community members who are returning their focus to health and wellness after the holidays. We remain committed to greeting everyone who walks through our doors with friendly faces, guidance, and support as they begin or continue their wellness journeys.

We're also looking ahead with excitement to the YMCA's 175th anniversary in 2026. Throughout the coming year, Membership will be rolling out special new-member incentives in celebration of this milestone—so stay tuned for opportunities you won't want to miss.

Behind the scenes, the Membership Team worked closely with our Executive Director, Bill Hoag, to coordinate Holiday Employee Appreciation meals. Bill has made it a priority to personally thank our staff for their dedication and hard work, helping to make the YMCA feel like a home away from home for members and guests during our first six months of operation.

Mark Your Calendars



New Water Aerobics Class Starting Jan. 7

You asked, we listened! Beginning **January 7**, we are excited to launch an evening **Water Aerobics** class!

This high-energy, low-impact workout will take place **every Wednesday from 6:00 PM–7:00 PM**, giving you a fun and refreshing way to stay active in the pool at a time that fits your schedule best.

Spots fill quickly—jump in and make Wednesday nights your new favorite workout at the Y!



Check out our January Wellness Challenge!

Get ready to kick off the New Year with **January's Wellness Challenge: Fresh Start 2026!**

We're excited to offer this fun and motivating challenge designed to inspire both new and existing Y members—and guests—to explore *all* areas of wellness at the Y.

From energizing group exercise classes to refreshing time in the pool, Fresh Start 2026 invites you to step outside your routine and try something new. Complete 20 wellness activities from the activity list throughout the month and earn a special prize as a reward for your commitment.

Stop by the Membership Desk or connect with one of our Wellness Coaches to pick up your list and get started. A fresh year, a fresh start—let's do this together at the Y!



NEW Group Exercise Class Starting in 2026

A new group exercise class on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:00 AM this month, **Groove & Gain!**

Kim Williams, current EnhanceFitness instructor will be adding Groove & Gain—a fun, music-driven class blending choreographed cardio with body-weight and resistance exercises to build stamina and strength.

Follow-easy-to-learn sequences set to upbeat music, with options to challenge balance, coordination and power in ways that naturally progress from EnhanceFitness foundations.

Come add a new *rhythm* to your fitness routine!

January "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 Exercise and Healthy Living Schedule-Mitchell

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	7 Sunrise Yoga Belinda *Room 109 **No class 1/6		**Delayed open at 8 am on 1/1/26		
9 Move & Tone Carolyn **Room 109	9 ReFit Morgan *Room 108	9 Water Aerobics *Pool	9 Move & Tone Carolyn *Room 108	9 Refit Morgan *Room 108	9 Water Aerobics *Pool
9 Move & Tone Carolyn **Room 109	9 Move & Tone Carolyn *Room 108	9 Move & Tone Carolyn *Room 108	9 Move & Tone Carolyn *Room 108	9 Move & Tone Carolyn *Room 108 **No Class 1/16	9 ReFit Morgan *Room 108
10 Enhance Fitness *Room 108 *Registration closed	**NEW 10 Groove & Gain Kim *Room 108	10 Enhance Fitness * Room 108 *Registration closed	10 All Levels Yoga Belinda *Room 109	**New 10 Groove & Gain Kim *Room 108	10 Enhance Fitness *Room 108 *Registration closed
11 Vinyasa Yoga Maria *Room 109	11 Delay the Disease *Room 108 By registration only	11 Chair Yoga Nichole *Room 109	11 Delay the Disease *Room 108 By registration only		
	12 Mat Pilates Maureen *Room 109 **NO Class 1/27		12 PIYO Whitney Room 108	12 Interval Strength Training Joe *Room 109	
		4:30 Yoga Sculpt Maria *Room 108	4 Barre Dalila *Room 108 **No class 1/1, 1/15, 1/22		
6 Zumba Sarah *Room 108	6 All Levels Yoga Belinda *Room 109		6 Zumba Sarah *Room 108		

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

[Group Exercise Schedule](#)

[January Aquatics Schedule](#)

JANUARY 2026 AQUATICS CLASS OFFERINGS AND PROGRAM DETAILS									
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday		
			Private Swim Lessons - Registration Required - 30 minutes throughout the day - Cost and Scheduling Online		Private Swim Lessons - Registration Required - 30 minutes throughout the day - Cost and Scheduling Online				
5:00 AM	CLOSED	CLOSED					CLOSED	CLOSED	
6:00 AM		CLOSED							
7:00 AM		CLOSED							
8:00 AM		Adult Swim Group Registration Required \$10/month member \$20/month non-member		Adult Swim Group Registration Required \$10/month member \$20/month non-member		Adult Swim Group Registration Required \$10/month member \$20/month non-member			
9:00 AM			Water Aerobics - 20 person cap		Water Aerobics - 20 person cap				
10:00 AM									
11:00 AM									Potential Pool Party
12:00 PM									
1:00 PM									
1:30 PM									
2:00 PM									Potential Pool Party
3:00 PM									
3:30 PM									
3:45 PM									
4:00 PM						Group Swim Lessons Beginner 2nd & 4th Fridays 3:45 - 4:30 Registration Required \$10/month member \$20/month non-member			CLOSED
4:30 PM						Group Swim Lessons Intermediate 2nd & 4th Fridays 4:30 - 5:15 Registration Required \$10/month member \$20/month non-member			
5:00 PM									
5:15 PM									
5:30 PM									
6:00 PM									
6:00 PM				NEW: Water Aerobics Class - 20 Person Capacity					
7:00 PM									
8:00 PM									
		CLOSED	Kayak Roll Session - 1st Tuesday only - Free for Members; \$3 for non- members		CLOSED				

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 Y movement 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!

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 today!

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](#)



Connect with us on:



A.M.Y. Wellness Foundation YMCA of Mitchell County | 97 Pinebridge Ave, Spruce Pine, NC
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