

## Name in the News: Michael Broderick

By Maureen O'Connell • May 31, 2019

As the YMCA of Honolulu celebrates its sesquicentennial this year, its role and relationship with the larger community on Oahu is continuing to change and evolve.

This month, the nonprofit announced that it intends to sell its entire Central Y property on the edge of Waikiki. Previously, in 2012, the Y had arranged to sell most of the 1.8-acre site for \$19 million to a developer, who planned to build a condominium tower. Sale proceeds were to finance a new Y facility on retained acreage.

At that time, the Y wanted to remain at the site, as the Central Y — with its fitness center, pool, youth program facilities and hostel rooms — had been a neighborhood staple for decades. But in subsequent years, the Y's development partnership gradually fizzled, and the neighborhood, near Ala Moana Center, underwent changes.

Now, said Michael Broderick, YMCA of Honolulu president and CEO, "There are fewer seniors and families, and many more high-end, high-rise condominiums, with their own fitness facilities." He added, "Our recent, and extensive, demographic research showed that our Nuuanu Branch is best positioned to serve the urban core."

Among the Y's ongoing initiatives is an effort to raise \$15 million to upgrade the Nuuanu branch as well as renovate cabins at Camp Erdman in Mokuleia and replace a trailer at the Waianae branch with a permanent building and activity court.

Born in Dallas and raised in Philadelphia, Broderick's initial work in Hawaii was as an attorney. Before taking on his leadership role at the Y nine years ago, he served as a Honolulu Family Court judge for several years.

"It was an absolute honor to serve. ... But after a while, I came to believe that I couldn't help many of the people who appeared before me — sadly, it was too late. I wanted to spend the last part of my career on the front end, preventing youth and families from ending up in family court. I knew the Y had so many wonderful prevention programs, so when the CEO job opened up, I tossed my hat into the ring. I have never looked back."

**Question:** The Y's mission is threefold: healthy living, youth development and social responsibility. Is there a concise way to describe the scope of services/programs/offerings?

**Answer:** Speaking honestly, because of the wide breadth of our programs and services, and because we serve all generations, from 6-month-olds to many in the 90s, there is no concise way to describe what the Y does. That is both good and bad. It is good because it speaks to how diverse our programs and services are. It is bad because it is hard to come up with an "elevator speech" that people can easily understand. But one thing is crystal clear. The Y is so much more than "swim and gym."

I tell people I didn't apply to be the CEO of a large fitness organization, or the CEO of a large human services organization. I applied to be the CEO of both! Just some examples: the Y offers drug treatment services, a pre-diabetes program, helps underserved youth get ready for kindergarten, teaches homeless children how to swim, helps middle schoolers bridge the summer learning gap, and provides A+ services at 58 schools. ... I don't think there is another organization in the state that offers that wide range of services. We are very proud of that.

**Q:** What do you see as top accomplishments since your start?

**A:** The Y is a team, so they are not my accomplishments. But since I started, our terrific team has developed state-of-the-art chronic disease programs, introduced character development into all of our youth programs, and started numerous initiatives for middle school, high school and college students that emphasize “servant leadership.” (A leadership style that stresses a deep desire to help other people as its primary motivation.)

Although it is not sexy, under the board’s direction, we also made tough decisions about how best to utilize our facilities. These include decisions about our Central and Atherton Ys that had been on the table for many, many years, and deciding to use the Central proceeds to expand or relocate our Kaimuki-Waialae Y.

We also have initiated a significant capital campaign. Finally, we’ve worked tirelessly to make sure people truly understand how important the Y is to this community — and has been for 150 years.

**Q:** The Y sold the Atherton branch in 2017, and now plans to set up facilities on the neighboring University of Hawaii-Manoa campus?

**A:** Yes. Now that the Atherton branch is no longer a landlord ... it’s devoting all of its time and resources to develop life-changing programs. An example is Y College Camp, which encourages high school students from underserved communities to graduate and to pursue higher education.

Our focus on professional and servant leadership development also includes the Y Leadership Camp, and youth and government programs. And soon the Atherton branch will be housed in the center of the UH campus, so we’ll be better able to recruit UH students who want to learn how to be servant leaders.

**Q:** Both the Central and Atherton branches had folded in housing — 115 hostel rooms and 53 apartments, respectively. Should the Y continue to offer housing?

**A:** Ys across the country, and our Y, have a long history of providing transitional housing. We feel good about that history. But over time, almost all Ys nationally have closed down residences. Of the thousands of Ys in the United States, less than 1% still offer transitional housing. Our board studied the matter very closely, and decided to follow that trend. Currently, we still offer rooms at Central and at Nuuanu.

**Q:** Looking forward, how’s that \$15 million initiative, or fundraising campaign, going?

**A:** Our board spent a lot of time thinking about how the Y could continue to contribute to community. Camp Erdman is not just a place to have fun. It also is a healing place for kids who have a parent in prison, a parent deployed in war, or a terminally ill sibling. What we constantly hear is that youth, families and seniors cherish their time at Camp, but they don’t like the cabins — just too old. So, we decided we needed to renovate the cabins to enhance the camp experience, and to stay financially sound.

As for our Waianae location, we do such important work there — helping middle schoolers and high schoolers get off of drugs and alcohol. But this critical work is done in a trailer. We felt our youth deserved better, so we are raising money to build a more permanent structure that is welcoming and safe. As for our Nuuanu branch, it is our flagship branch, and must be properly maintained. We want it to be completely handicap accessible, and to have more space for youth and senior programming.

The capital campaign is going well. We have secured \$7,952,000, or 53% of our goal. We are so grateful for the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations.

**Q:** What do you find most rewarding/enjoyable about your work?

**A:** I am as excited today about my job as the day I started on Nov. 1, 2010. First, I haven’t met a jerk yet at the Y! They are all just such great people. Second, every day I get to help an organization that is changing, and sometimes saving lives. How cool is that? And third, I work for a board that is incredibly supportive, never micro-manages me, and who cares deeply about the Y and our special state of Hawaii. I feel blessed to be here.

**Q:** What’s most challenging?

**A:** ... The Y has 1,400 employees, 500 volunteers, nine branches and serves more than 100,000 people a year, including 25,000 youth. With that context, my biggest challenge is making sure, absolutely certain, that we are doing everything within our power to keep our employees, our volunteers, our fitness members and all our program participants safe. I know how hard our team works to ensure safety for all, but it is still always on my mind.

**Q:** You must hear striking personal accounts about how the Y can help or even transform lives?

**A:** A few months into the job, I gave a keynote speech on trauma — something I saw a lot of in Family Court. At the end, a young woman came up to me. She got real close and she whispered, “Judge Broderick, I used to be a drug addict. The Kalihi Branch — their drug treatment program — they saved my life.” She cried, I cried, we hugged and I never saw her again. But I think of her often, and the countless others who tell me how much the Y means to them.