



## HISTORY OF THE YMCA

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth is part of a worldwide organization dedicated to putting Christian principles into practice through programs, services and relationships that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Founded in 1844 in London, England, the YMCA quickly became a popular organization. The YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth was established in 1890 when Fort Worth was just a frontier town. In those early days, a "Gospel Wagon" was used to transport young men from the streets of Fort Worth to rented YMCA facilities where their physical and spiritual needs were addressed.

In 1903, the first YMCA was organized to serve Fort Worth's African-American community, and in 1919 the branch became a part of the Fort Worth YMCA. The branch was renamed the McDonald YMCA in 1944 when William M. McDonald, a well-respected African-American businessman, donated a building that was used from 1944-1971. The McDonald YMCA moved to its Berry Street location in 1971 and merged with the Southeast YMCA to become the McDonald Southeast YMCA in 2013.

During the 20th century, two legendary leaders of Fort Worth, Amon G. Carter, Sr., and his son, Amon G. Carter, Jr., were instrumental in helping the YMCA grow. Amon Carter, Sr., served on the YMCA board in the early years, laying the cornerstone for the Downtown YMCA building in 1924 and helping establish Camp Carter YMCA with a gift of land in 1948. It was Amon Carter, Jr.'s influence, after serving time in a WWII prison camp and befriending a YMCA worker there, that inspired the development of **Camp Carter**. Like his father, Amon Carter, Jr., also served as the board chair for the Downtown YMCA. After his death, the central YMCA building was renamed the Amon G. Carter, Jr. Downtown YMCA in honor of Carter's service as board chair.

Through the years, a number of additional YMCAs have opened in the Fort Worth area, including the:

- Poly YMCA (1937), which later became the Eastside YMCA,
- Northwest YMCA (1946), which began as the Northside YMCA,
- Westside YMCA (1948 - 2019), originally called the Arlington Heights YMCA,
- E. R. Van Zandt Southwest YMCA (1952- 2018), which began as the TCU-Southside branch,
- Airport YMCA (1985) which became The Bedford Center YMCA (2023),
- Southeast YMCA (1991 - 2013),
- Clark Nowlin YMCA (1991-2008),
- Ryan Family YMCA (1994),
- Benbrook Community Center/YMCA (2000),
- Hood County YMCA (2006) and
- Northpark YMCA (2008).

In 2013, the Joshua Community YMCA opened in collaboration with the City of Joshua. Also, the YMCA Sports Complex was opened in partnership with the City of Fort Worth that year. At the end of 2013, the McDonald and Southeast YMCAs merged to become the McDonald Southeast YMCA. Together, the YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth's 10 branches, one sports complex, and a year-round camp property all continue the organization's cause of strengthening communities by encouraging youth development, emphasizing healthy living, and inspiring social responsibility.