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ONE TEXAS

TEXAS YMCAs STATE CONFERENCE
October 27 - 29, 2025



Presented by
 Frost

FORT WORTH

STOCKYARDS

STOCKYARDS STATION
140 E. Exchange Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76164



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conference details

WELCOME TO COWTOWN!



Eric Tucker

Chair, Texas Alliance of YMCAs

Welcome to the 2025 Texas YMCAs State Conference, presented by Frost Bank!

This conference is a time to learn new skills, reconnect with colleagues, build new friendships, and envision the growing potential of YMCAs across Texas. Through the Texas Alliance, our collective impact and influence continue to rise. Together, we've helped secure more than \$100 million in new state funding for childcare, supported communities affected by Hill Country flooding, and fueled new interest in YMCA facilities and services statewide.

As my time as chair comes to a close, I'm especially proud of the progress and growing relevance of YMCAs across Texas. With Jeff Andresen, CEO of the Central Texas YMCA, stepping into the chair role, I'm confident the list of policy makers, community champions and business partners who look to the YMCA as a trusted ally will continue to grow.

For more than 140 years, Texas YMCAs have strengthened minds, bodies, and communities – and from here in Fort Worth, the future looks brighter than ever.

Thank you for everything you do for the YMCA and for communities across our great state.



Greg Hartman

CEO, Texas Alliance of YMCAs

Community is at the heart of the YMCA mission. This state conference is about bringing together the community of Texas YMCA leaders to learn, connect, and celebrate the impact we make together. We grow stronger when we share our ideas, support one another, and combine our talents to expand the Y's reach and relevance across Texas.

Throughout this conference, you'll hear powerful "Y stories" from colleagues and from people who recognize the power and potential of your work. The details may differ, but the message is always the same: the YMCA brings people together, strengthens communities, and opens doors to opportunity.

It's an honor to help tell the YMCA story across our state. It's a story made possible by your dedication every single day. Thank you for your commitment and passion. I hope this conference renews your energy, deepens your connections, and inspires new possibilities for the mission and promise of the YMCA in Texas.



Jeff Andresen

Incoming Chair, Texas Alliance of YMCAs

It is an honor to be asked to Chair the Texas Alliance of YMCAs. I am humbled by the wonderful work that each of you do in your communities and look forward to working together to advance our statewide impact.

I want to thank Eric Tucker for his two years of leadership as Chair of the Alliance. Eric's national connections and understanding of Y-USA's pulse amazes me. Eric has many more friends than I do, and I am jealous.

The Alliance has made significant strides over the last few years. We are stronger when we work together and appreciate the value of everyone's perspective, regardless of budget size, community make-up or tenure in the Y.

That being said, one of my goals as Chair will be to deliberately involve our emerging leaders into the Alliance. The future of Texas YMCA's success depends on you. It only makes sense to include our subject matter experts and energetic leaders who have current hands-on, day-to-day experience.

Please enjoy your conference. I look forward to working with you over the next two years.



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28

TIME	TOPIC	PRESENTERS	LOCATION
8:00 – 9:00 am	Texas Alliance Board Meeting		Stockyards Station
9:00 – 9:20 am	Welcome Remarks/Mission Moment	Mike Brown, Eric Tucker, Greg Hartman	Stampede Room
9:20 – 9:30 am	Presenting Sponsor: Frost Bank	Hadley Woerner , Tarrant Region President, Frost Bank	Stampede Room
BREAKOUT SESSION A – 9:35 – 10:20 am			
Group 1	Community Partnerships/Economic Development Collaboration	Alex Meade , Sr. VP, Texas Regional Bank	Stockman's Club
Group 2	YMCA Leader Presentation: #nextgenneeds – Transforming the YMCA Workforce for Tomorrow	La Shae Leonard , Assoc. VP of Communications, YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas	Stampede Room
BREAK – 10:20 – 10:30 am			
10:30 – 11:15 am	Creating a Culture of Safety/Praesidium Accreditation	Britt Darwin-Looney , Vice President, Child Protection and Organizational Risk, YMCA of the USA	Stampede Room
11:15 – 11:25 am	Gold Sponsor: Build-A-Sign	Brian Olds , Vice President of Sales Samantha Steadman , Senior Account Manager	Stampede Room
BREAKOUT SESSION B – 11:30 am – 12:15 pm			
Group 1	Early Childhood Development Trends	Moderator: Kathy Kuras , President & CEO, YMCA of Greater Austin Dr. Hope Gerde , Founding Director, Texas A&M University Institute for Early Childhood Development & Education Tricia Holzworth , Training Manager, Child & Family Development, YMCA of Greater Toronto Lynn Baker , Senior Training Manager of Training, Research & Development, YMCA of Greater Toronto	Stampede Room
Group 2	The Catalyst: Developing Innovation with Frontline Leaders	Jacquelyn Kotar , VP of Training & Development, YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth	Stockman's Club
LUNCH – 12:15 – 1:45 pm in the Stockman's Club			
12:30 – 12:40 pm	Lunch Sponsor: Pulse Fitness	Ben Clark	Stockman's Club
12:45 – 1:30 pm	Recipe for Service – the Chick-fil-A Way	Sanel Thomas , Fort Worth Y Board Member & Chick-fil-A Franchise Owner	Stockman's Club
VENDOR BINGO VISITS – 1:45 – 2:15 pm			
2:15 – 2:50 pm	Trends in Philanthropy/Grant Acquisition	Moderator: Curt Hazelbaker , President & CEO, YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas Stacey Malcolmson , President & CEO, The Senior Source Julie Diaz , President & CEO, The Dallas Foundation	Stampede Room



TUESDAY, continued

2:50 – 3:00 pm	Silver Sponsor: Food-For-Good Foundation (PepsiCo)	Madeline Ghanem , Growth Strategy Analyst	Stockman's Club
3:00 – 3:45 pm	Keynote Address: Leadership, Innovation & Growth	The Honorable Mattie Parker , Mayor of Fort Worth Mike Brown , President & CEO, YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth	Stampede Room
3:45 – 3:50 pm	Wrap Up	Get ready to watch the cattle drive!	Stampede Room

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29

TIME	TOPIC	PRESENTERS	LOCATION
9:00 – 9:25 am	Welcome Remarks/Mission Moment	Mike Brown, Eric Tucker, Greg Hartman	Stampede Room
9:25 – 10:25 am	AI Ready – Making AI Work for Us	Dr. Tonja Grimbale , CEO of STEM It Up Sports	Stampede Room
BREAKOUT SESSION C – 10:30 – 11:45 am			
Group 1	YMCA Leader Presentation: Corporate Cup	Maddie Nygaard , Sports Director, YMCA of Midland	Stampede Room
Group 2	YMCA Leader Presentation: Aspire: Growing Leaders at the Y	Brian Spence , Sr. VP of Youth Development, YMCA of Central Texas	Stockman's Club
11:45 – 11:55 am	Vendor Bingo Prize Winners Announced	Mike Brown	Stampede Room
11:55 – noon	Final Conference Wrap-Up	Eric Tucker, Greg Hartman	Stampede Room



CONFERENCE PRESENTERS



LYNN BAKER, Senior Training Manager of Training, Research & Development, YMCA of Greater Toronto | Lynn Baker is a Senior Training Manager at the YMCA of Greater Toronto, where she supports the implementation of YMCA Playing to Learn and A Place to Connect curricula across Canada. With over 25 years of experience, she is passionate about empowering educators to create engaging, play-based learning environments for young children.



MIKE BROWN, President & CEO, YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth | Mike Brown, Jr. is the President & CEO of YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth, bringing over 30 years of leadership experience across seven YMCA communities nationwide. Guided by personal resilience and a lifelong commitment to service, Brown continues to inspire and empower communities to reach their fullest potential.



BRITT DARWIN-LOONEY, Senior Vice President of Child Protection and Organizational Risk, Y-USA | Britt Darwin-Looney is the Senior Vice President of Child Protection and Organizational Risk at Y-USA, where she leads efforts to strengthen safety and risk management across YMCAs nationwide. A recognized expert with over 20 years of experience, she has consulted on hundreds of abuse prevention cases and trained thousands of professionals in child protection best practices.



JULIE DIAZ, President & CEO, The Dallas Foundation | Julie Diaz is the President and CEO of The Dallas Foundation, where she leads efforts to unite donors, nonprofits, and community leaders to drive lasting impact across North Texas. Since joining in 2019, her strategic leadership has fueled record growth in contributions and grant making, positioning the Foundation as a catalyst for collaboration and positive change.



DR. HOPE GERDE, Founding Director, Texas A&M University Institute for Early Childhood Development & Education | Dr. Hope Gerde, a professor in the College of Education & Human Development at Texas A&M University, collaborates with YMCAs across Texas on curriculum implementation and assessment. Her research focuses on promoting early language and literacy development through teacher professional development and high-quality adult-child interactions.



DR. TONJIA GRIMBLE, International Speaker, Community Developer & Founder/CEO of STEM It Up Sports | Dr. Tonjia Grimble, known as Dr. G, is an international speaker and founder of STEM It Up Sports, with over 30 years of experience advancing STEM education worldwide. She empowers educators and youth through innovative, hands-on STEM programs that bridge learning and career development.



GREG HARTMAN, CEO, Texas Alliance of YMCAs | Greg Hartman serves as the first CEO for the Texas Alliance of YMCAs. A former longtime president of the Seton Healthcare Network and chief operating officer of Texas A&M University, Greg now represents the interests and concerns of 20 independent Ys across Texas to build capacity and leadership, while fostering statewide communication and collaboration.



CURT HAZELBAKER, President & CEO, YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas | Curt Hazelbaker is the President and CEO of the YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas, bringing over 40 years of YMCA leadership experience across local, regional, and national levels. A lifelong champion of the Y's mission, he continues to strengthen communities through service, collaboration, and innovation.



TRICIA HOLZWORTH, Senior Manager of Training, Research & Development, YMCA of Greater Toronto | Tricia Holzworth is the Senior Manager of Training, Research & Development at the YMCA of Greater Toronto, bringing over 25 years of experience in early childhood education. She has led national initiatives like YMCA Playing to Learn, advancing training and research that strengthen programs for children, educators, and communities across Canada.



JACQUELYN KOTAR, VP of Training & Development, YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth | With over 19 years of experience at the YMCA of Fort Worth, Jacquelyn Kotar, Vice President of Training & Development, has dedicated her career to building safe, inclusive programs that empower communities and individuals to thrive. Her passion for growing talent has enabled her to implement impactful initiatives, from developing talent models to ensuring safety standards that benefit the greater community.



KATHY KURAS, President & CEO, YMCA of Austin | Kathy Kuras is the President and CEO of the YMCA of Austin—the first woman to hold this role in the organization's history. With over 30 years of YMCA leadership experience nationwide, she is known for driving innovation, strategic partnerships, and community impact in youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.



LA SHAE LEONARD, Associate VP of Communications, YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas | La Shae Leonard is the Associate Vice President of Communications for the YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas, where she leads digital strategy, content creation, and association-wide communications initiatives. Passionate about innovation and collaboration, she also serves on national and local Emerging Leaders Resource Network committees, advancing the YMCA's brand and digital presence.



STACEY MALCOLMSON, President & CEO, The Senior Source | Stacey Malcolmson, President and CEO of The Senior Source, leads efforts to enhance the lives of 25,000 older adults in Dallas each year. A Harvard MBA and former Frito-Lay marketing professional, she brings extensive nonprofit leadership experience and a passion for community service.



ALEX MEADE, Executive Vice President – Economic Development, Texas Regional Bank | Meade is the Executive Vice President of Texas Regional Bank, overseeing public policy and economic development across the state. With over 20 years of experience at the local, state, and federal levels, he previously served as City Manager of Pharr and CEO of the Mission Economic Development Corporation, leading major projects that generated significant job growth and investment.



MADDIE NYGAARD, Sports Director, YMCA of Midland | Maddie Nygaard is the Sports Director at the YMCA of Midland, where she leads inclusive, engaging programs that foster youth development, teamwork, and community impact. She is passionate about helping children and families learn, grow, and thrive through athletics and the Y's mission.



MATTIE PARKER, Mayor of Fort Worth | Mayor Mattie Parker, now in her third term leading the nation's 11th largest city, is focused on building a safer, stronger Fort Worth by advancing public safety, expanding education and workforce opportunities, and fostering a high quality of life across every community. Her next-generation leadership emphasizes innovation, collaboration, and preserving the city's pioneering spirit.



BRIAN SPENCE, Senior VP of Youth Development, YMCA of Central Texas | Brian Spence is the Senior Vice President of Youth Development for the YMCA of Central Texas. He has been with Central Texas for the last 16 years, and has been with the YMCA movement for 32 years.



SANEL THOMAS, Restaurant Franchisee Chick-fil-A Stockyards & YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth Board of Directors | Sanel Thomas is a Chick-fil-A franchisee with over 15 years of experience. Starting as a team member, Sanel has done every role in the restaurant as well as travel the country to open new restaurants in existing and emerging markets. In addition, Sanel currently serves on the board of directors for the YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth.



ERIC TUCKER, President & CEO, Arlington–Mansfield Area YMCA | Eric Tucker is the President & CEO of the Arlington–Mansfield Area YMCA and Chair of the Texas State Alliance of YMCAs. An Air Force veteran with nearly 30 years of YMCA leadership, he's known for his visionary, data-driven approach to strengthening communities locally and globally.

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