

Since 1855, the YMCA has been making a difference in Stockton



MICHAEL McCOLLUM/The Record

Kids play with a large beach ball Wednesday at the YMCA summer day camp at Lincoln High School in Stockton.

Y marks the spot

By Joe Goldeen
Record Staff Writer

STOCKTON — It might not have its own gym or pool any longer — in fact, it's been without a building for almost two decades — but the YMCA of San Joaquin County is alive and thriving.

One of the oldest private institutions in the county, the Y predates the Children's Home of Stockton that opened 100 years ago. St. Joseph's Medical Center treated its first patient in 1899. The Record published its first newspaper in 1895.

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And the Bank of Stockton accepted its first deposit in 1867.

Founded in Stockton in 1855, just four years after the London-based Young Men's Christian Association first organized in the United States in Boston in 1851, the nonprofit

charity started providing lodging and activities to eager young men en route to seeking their fortunes in the gold fields of the Mother Lode.

A "Programme" from 1885, courtesy of The Haggin Museum, listed the "Privileges of Membership" at the time as "Educational Evening Classes; Book-keeping; Elocution; Writing; Bible Study and Calisthenics." Physical activities included "Baths; Rambling Club; Light Gymnastics; and Employment Bureau."

Under "Literary and Social," members could par-

ticipate in "Reading Room; Lectures; Medical Talks; Musical and Literary Receptions (Monthly); Conversation and Game Room." Religious work included "Gospel Services; Bible Classes; Song Service; Special Services for Young Men; Evangelistic Meetings, etc."

All this could be had for an annual \$5 membership fee — "No extra fees. Ladies eligible to membership, and are entitled to all secular advantages except physical."

Over the ensuing years, the Stockton-based Y had many

SEE YMCA, PAGE A7

YMCA: 2,600 kids in its sports programs

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1
homes and countless fund drives to build larger and more modern facilities. After it moved away from housing single young men, it focused on gymnasiums and recreational activities.

Today, the county's YMCA is strictly program based, operating on a \$2.4 million annual budget with a small administrative office housing seven full-time staffers who help facilitate activities at dozens of sites in Stockton, Tracy, Lodi, Linden and Modesto. About 270 part-time workers supervise activities for thousands of youngsters and their parents. The bulk of those individuals — 160 — work 20 to 35 hours a week at after-school sites.

Its list of family and youth services includes preschools, before- and after-school child-care, teen enrichment, water safety and swimming instruction, school-break camps, Y Adventure Guides programs and, of course, youth sports.

Executive Director Rich Good, who came to the YMCA 2½ years ago after 28 years as a Boy Scout executive, said today's focus is largely on providing an opportunity for kids from 3 years old through fifth grade to be active, learn sportsmanship and the proper way to participate in a team sport, to have fun and to enjoy positive interactions with their parents.

He said his staff teaches kids the core values of the modern Y — "honesty, respect, caring and responsibility" — on a daily basis.

One of the YMCA's primary funding sources is the Stockton Unified School District, where it has a contract to supervise

14 after-school sites at three high schools and 11 elementary schools.

"They are very strong partners. They do all they can to support us as we are trying to meet our educational goals. One thing I really admire about them is most of the people I work with are outstanding individuals, very good mentors for our kids. They just go above and beyond — it makes my job easier," said Janet Yarbrough, the district's after-school administrator.

The Y has 2,600 children in its sports programs, learning and participating in such activities as T-ball and soccer. Its swim program also is a critical component. YMCA lifeguards and swimming instructors now staff seven pools at high schools and community centers around the county.

"Pools are so under-used these days. To not have it running for 14 to 16 hours a day during summer is a crime," Good said. "This county is No. 1 for drownings and near drownings. It has 1,700 miles of shoreline, more than any other in California. Learning to swim is the No. 1 way to stop drowning."

Last week, the Y was able to open two city swimming pools — Oak Park and McKinley — thanks to donations from Stockton residents.

San Joaquin Delta College student Sokcon Swing, 26, a self-described "lifelong YMCA kid" who started working at age 16 with the Siskyou Family YMCA in Yreka, is a counselor at the San Joaquin Y's summer day camp at Lincoln High School.

With up to 70 children a day,



MICHAEL McCOLLUM/The Record

Jasmine Trevino, 16, with San Joaquin County WorkNet, plays with children Wednesday at the YMCA summer day camp at Lincoln High School in Stockton.

each week follows a different theme such as superheroes, pirates or outer space.

"All activities are based on the theme for the week. Kids have numerous activities throughout the day, with plenty of free play time built in," Swing said. In the morning, the kids sing camp songs. The counselors rotate in to various activities which allow them to learn every child's name and specialize in what they are best at doing.

Day camper Kathryn Brown, 9, said if she wasn't at camp she'd be spending the day at her grandmother's watching television. She likes swimming the best, "and kid's choice. That's where we get to play group activity. The whole group gets to just play."

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