



YMCA Blue Ridge Family and Friends,

This issue of The Blue Ridge Voice was completed and printed prior to the events of September 27, 2024. Hurricane Helene caused catastrophic damage to our property and to the entire Western North Carolina region. We hope you are keeping up with our updates on [www.blueridgeassembly.org/storm-relief](http://www.blueridgeassembly.org/storm-relief).

We considered not sending out this issue, but ultimately felt the stories – our summer recap, our emphasis on youth development, and our feature on the Lotz Lodge dedication – were ones we still wanted you to see. Even in the midst of the grief we are feeling at the destruction and loss throughout campus, we still find joy in knowing what an impactful summer we had. And we thought it might help give us all hope for the joys and accomplishments we will one day celebrate again.

Our upcoming calendar, of course, has changed. Our agenda for the next few months will focus on assessing our damage and then we will start walking through our journey of restoring and repairing our places. Let these stories and events help us to remember the positive, life-changing impacts on youth, teens and families provided within these spaces we treasure.

With love from the Mountain,

Melissa Bailey Logan  
President and CEO





# THE BLUE RIDGE VOICE

OCTOBER 2024

## GREETINGS FROM THE MOUNTAIN!



What a tremendous, impactful summer! Just like my first summer, 2024 will be one that I will always remember. This summer was filled mainly with laughter, joy and celebration. **Youth, teens, adults and families came to YMCA Blue Ridge and truly enjoyed building that home away from home.** The beauty of being on the Mountain is that you get the gift of time and community – time to reflect and wonder, space to discern, freedom to dream...all with a community that helps you handle whatever you are walking through. And much to my surprise was my opportunity to experience and be fully present in the moments and emotions of each week’s program. **Simply stated – the power of place, people and programs was significant.**

Community is formed through a shared experience, through an “I feel that way sometimes too,” or “You should hear this speaker,” or “Tell me your story.” **The impact of one week or weekend on this Mountain can provide lasting support to people forever.** A friend made in authentic relationship through vulnerability, a truth that solidifies in our hearts, a surrender of what we can’t control...all have lasting influence in the future.

Here are a few powerful moments from this summer:

- **Sitting on Eureka Porch at Vespers** where teens paused at the end of their day, without distraction, to gaze out on the Craggy Mountains, **hear an inspirational message from a peer and reflect on it.**
- Watching teens and families cry and give hugs as they prepare to depart the Mountain, all with people who were strangers five days prior. **Together, they felt the joy of community and a lightness from sharing burdens.**
- Listening to Sarah Roberts, Chaplain for the Oklahoma University Softball Team, speak on **“Overwhelmed to Overflowing”** because Lisa sought me out and thought I might need to hear it. Thank you, Lisa!
- **Dedicating Lotz Lodge**, a beautiful new multi-generational space in memory of Danny Lotz, **with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.** What an amazing, momentous day!
- **Convening an inspiring group of YMCA CEOs for a summit to identify what is needed from Christian leaders in the YMCA Movement** and discussing what it means to put Christian principles into practice in the 21st Century.
- Helping families have fun together at June and July family camps. **As one mom summarized, “...my kids had been loved so well here that they knew how to love others...”**

YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly was full of youth, teens and families walking THROUGH something this summer – walking through isolation pursuing connection, through anxiety seeking peace, through struggle searching for contentment and/or through sadness towards joy. **The THROUGH offers much hope**, especially on the Mountain. Here, we have real connections, authentic relationships and joys beyond measure.

**This significant work doesn’t end with summer; it continues. Our fall season is filled with school groups and retreats of all types** – youth, family, women’s and men’s. I’m eagerly watching for the communities created and strengthened throughout the fall.

**You are the reason we can do this important work;** it’s because of your support! Thank you for your partnership and for investing in YMCA Blue Ridge. For this and so much more, we are grateful.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Melissa Bailey Logan  
Chief Executive Officer



**“Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.”**

**Psalm 77:19**





# HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2024

The YMCAs of the Southeast Hall of Fame is hosted annually at YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly. It serves as a forum to recognize YMCA professionals and volunteers who have devoted their lives to serving others – **making a positive impact on individuals, on their community and on the YMCA movement throughout the Southeast.**

The individuals who will be inducted this year are no exception. We are excited to announce the **Class of 2024:**



**OMEGA  
AUTRY**

**YMCA of  
Greater Charlotte**  
Charlotte, NC



**RALPH  
BRUNSON**

**YMCA of  
Middle Tennessee**  
Nashville, TN



**BOB  
GILBERTSON**

**Tampa  
Metropolitan  
Area YMCA**  
Tampa, FL



**JERRY  
HARALSON**

**YMCA of  
Central Florida**  
Orlando, FL



**DOROTHY "DOT"  
HOLMAN**

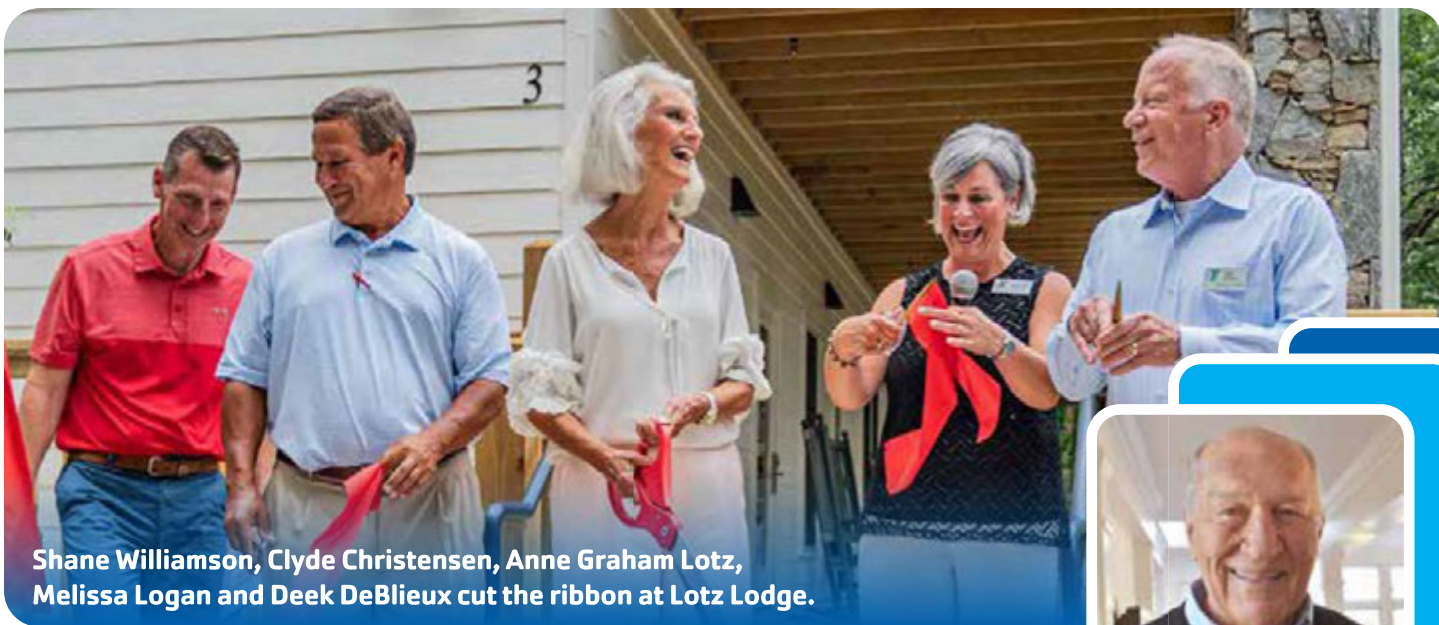
**YMCA of  
Middle Tennessee**  
Nashville, TN



**WILLIAM "BILL"  
HUFFMAN**

**YMCA of  
Greater  
Birmingham**  
Birmingham, AL





Shane Williamson, Clyde Christensen, Anne Graham Lotz, Melissa Logan and Deek DeBlieux cut the ribbon at Lotz Lodge.



Danny Lotz

# A LEGACY OF FAITH

## Lotz Lodge

On a beautiful June day, in partnership with Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly dedicated Lotz Lodge in memory of Danny Lotz. Danny championed the mission of FCA and was a faithful attendee of FCA camps at YMCA Blue Ridge. Along with his wife, Anne Graham Lotz, Danny had a vision to see coaches and athletes impact the world for Christ. Each summer, he would come to the Mountain to invest in the lives of people. Lotz Lodge now stands as a physical testimony to the investment Danny made in the spiritual development of so many. Lotz Lodge is a platform in which the work of FCA camps can continue and YMCA Blue Ridge can strengthen its commitment to families.



Anne Graham Lotz shares a smile with daughter Morrow Reitmeier in Lotz Lodge.



### A Lasting Partnership

FCA camps began at YMCA Blue Ridge 60 years ago in 1964. YMCA Blue Ridge seeks to strengthen and deepen its commitment to youth development and families through this partnership with FCA. At the dedication Melissa Logan commented, "FCA's value for creating relationships that demonstrate a steadfast commitment to Christ and His Word align beautifully with YMCA's belief that faith, open dialogue, caring and respect need to be, and actually must be, reinforced in today's world." Shane Williamson, President and CEO of FCA, gave his personal testimony of accepting Christ as a young man in 1986 while attending FCA camp at YMCA Blue Ridge. He relayed how formative the camps and conferences on this Mountain have been in the spiritual lives of his entire family and in the lives of many others. Shane noted as he gestured behind him to the Lodge, "I am so grateful ... to be standing here today, and to watch God do an amazing work, AGAIN, in a different way, A NEW WAY, on this Mountain."







Anne Graham Lotz with daughter Rachel-Ruth Lotz Wright and granddaughters



**“Your legacy is not something you leave when you die; it’s something you begin to build now.”**



Eddie Gran and Dowell Loggains fellowship with other attendees of the Lotz Lodge dedication.



## Danny’s Legacy

Danny was very involved in the FCA camps at YMCA Blue Ridge and attended for over 40 years. When discussing camp, Danny “was energized by what was going to happen in this place,” said Johnny Evans, Eastern North Carolina FCA Director. Many in attendance at the dedication had very personal relationships with Danny and were led to Christ by him or were disciplined by him. Johnny also called him a big brother, a father figure, and an accountability partner. Danny was about **God’s Word, God’s work and God’s will** according to Johnny and challenged people to do the work God called them to do. Johnny noted that Danny “literally wore himself out for Christ and his Kingdom ... what a legacy, what a life, to wear yourself out and not rust out.”



Eastern North Carolina FCA Director Johnny Evans speaks at dedication joined by Clyde Christensen (left) and Eddie Gran (right).

Anne talked about her husband’s legacy being more than a building and how it was really about the people who “came under his leadership.” **She stated, “Your legacy is not something that you leave when you die; it’s something that you begin to build now. And it’s who you are. And what you invest in.”**

## A Place of Transformation

The focus of the day was on Danny Lotz, remembering his work with FCA, and also on the future work that would take place in the new Lodge. **The Lodge is meant to be a place for families and small groups to come together in community. It is the vehicle for the transformational work being done by conferences like FCA.** Shane spoke of how the Lodge would be used to house many coaches and athletes coming to FCA camps and invited all to recognize “the unbelievable moment we rarely get, to sit in the presence of the Lord, seeing His faithfulness that has gone before us and celebrating His plans for the future generations that will experience it.”

**The design of the Lodge serves the needs of today’s groups by providing modern conveniences and comfortable spaces for multigenerational guests.** Anne commented that the design of the lodge was beautiful and “Absolutely Fabulous!” She spoke of being blessed by spending the previous evening with FCA and seeing young people with their Bibles spending time learning about Jesus. **She concluded, “I know this facility is going to be dedicated to the glory of God ... We want this to be a place where people draw near to Jesus.”**





Fellowship of Christian Athletes President & CEO Shane Williamson, Anne Graham Lotz and YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly President & CEO Melissa Logan.



**“I am so grateful ... to be standing here today, and to watch God do an amazing work, AGAIN, in a different way, A NEW WAY, on this Mountain.”**



The Craggy Mountain view from Lotz Lodge

## REID GOT IT RIGHT!

The lower level of Lotz Lodge is dedicated in memory of Reid Bowyer, who spent his career at FCA overseeing FCA camps throughout North and South Carolina. Reid shared his passion for the life-changing power of Jesus through summer camps for FCA coaches, their families and athletes.

Reid sowed the seeds of God’s love through an infectious smile and comforting hugs. He used his work in FCA to serve others and show them the love of Christ. This space in Lotz Lodge will be a special place of gathering together in community and showing love to others.



Josh Gilreath dedicates the Bowyer level.



Jodi Bowyer with sons Hudson and Hayes.



# DEVELOPING FUTURE LEADERS

Our focus on serving teens is to instill the importance of interpersonal relationships, develop leadership skills and teach the value of faith and respect. This summer conferences filled the Mountain with hundreds of teens each week – over 5,000 in total! Despite each of these conferences having a different mission and set of goals, they all focus on encouraging young people to engage with their communities, learn from trusted adults, build strong relationships, and work at discovering the kind of person they want to be.

## TEAMWORK is...



Competing as a team on the court



Planning and performing a morning devotion

## MENTORING is...



Passing down knowledge to the next generation



Leading your friends in prayer

## COMMUNITY is...



Debating policy with respect for each other

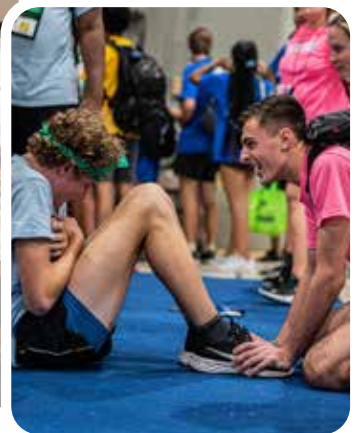


Getting covered in ketchup and whipped cream

## ACHIEVEMENT is...



Preparing for life after high school



Setting a personal best in sit-ups

Teamwork, mentoring, community and achievement are all principles of leadership that can be achieved through varying programs and activities. The work of engaging the hearts and minds of young people doesn't always have to follow one formula. YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly allows many different groups to come here and in implementing their own missions, complete our mission of being the platform for leadership development.

## Bridge Building in Action

Making significant societal changes requires engaging the hearts and minds of young people, and YMCA Blue Ridge strives to accomplish this through our Collegiate Leadership Program. This summer, we welcomed more than 80 young adults from 17 states and 14 countries to spend the summer living and working on the Mountain. Many are away from home for the first time and learn basic life skills – time management, decision making, interpersonal relationship skills, problem solving, money management, critical thinking and home maintenance. This program is more than just a job or summer experience. We impart the well-established principles of valuing the dignity of all labor, implementing servant leadership, listening to understand and appreciating the individual over stereotypes.



On International Night, our staff share food from their part of the world.



# COMING UP

## Black Mountain Music Festival

\* October 12–17, 2024

## Weatherford Y Alumni Fall Festival

October 28–30, 2024

## Teen Staff Academy

\* November 11–13, 2024

## Thanksgiving Family Camp

\* November 27–30, 2024

## YMCA Principles & Practices

December 10–11, 2024

\* Register for these events at [blueridgeassembly.org/now-registering](https://blueridgeassembly.org/now-registering).

## Campfire Conference

January 26–29, 2025

## YMCA Professional Network Conference

March 19–21, 2025

## 2025 Family Camps

\* May 23–26

\* July 27–August 1

\* November 26–29



YMCA Blue Ridge's Mountaintop Gift Shop is now open online! Visit today to shop a selection of Blue Ridge apparel and gifts and have a reminder of the Mountain shipped to your door!



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