



In the Spotlight



Rev. Yolonda Hughes, Esq. Getting Stronger Everyday at the YMCA

In 2010, Yolonda Hughes' life was thriving – as a successful attorney, committed churchgoer, and avid walker. In fact, she completed two half marathons, one in Alaska and one in Philly.

Until one day in 2011, when taking her usual walk, she had trouble catching her breath after half a block. Yolonda thought it was just a nagging cold. After some time passed, on the advice of family and friends, Yolonda went to the doctor. The next thing she knew, the Yeadon resident was admitted to the hospital with dangerously high creatinine levels. Essentially, her kidneys were shutting down. Following a rigorous three months in the hospital, Yolonda was discharged with a port in her chest for later dialysis treatments. She lived with her sister in New Jersey while recovering, and once she was able to take short walks on her own, she was determined to fully bounce back.

“I wanted to get back to my life, back to my home.”

But the journey wouldn't be easy. In 2013, she inquired about getting on a kidney transplant list.

“I had work to do first. I was obese, and my body mass index was off the charts. I started trying to lose weight on my own, but it just wasn't happening quickly enough, so I joined the Y. The staff held me accountable for my workouts, and became my cheering section.”

Yolonda enrolled in the 12-week LIVESTRONG program – her goal was to find a structured regimen to learn about weight management and exercise benefits.

Soon enough, down went her weight and BMI.

“That doubled my motivation. I was excited to buy all new clothes, and I feel great in them! Plus, I donated six huge bags of clothing that became too big.”

Today, Yolonda is so close to reaching her goal weight, and will be eligible to begin the kidney transplant process. Not only is Yolonda's health improving, but her circle of friends is expanding, too.

“You don't realize people are noticing you, and one by one, I'm getting to know employees and members. They tell me how good I'm doing, give me lots of encouragement, and keep me laughing.”

Since Yolonda's family all live out of state, she says her family is right here at the Y.

“God blessed me to get to the Lansdowne Y, so for me, it's the YMCA for life.”