

YWCA names Emily Ellison as its new CEO

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta has tapped longtime civic leader **Emily Ellison** to serve as its new president and CEO. Ellison is one of the founders of the Atlanta Girls School; she currently serves as its director of advancement. She plans to join the YWCA on July 15.

The YWCA of Greater Atlanta has been led by **Sharmen Gowens**, who has been its interim CEO since August, following the departure of **Justine Boyd**.



Maria Saporta

Gowens will be returning to her role as a YWCA board member in August. "I hope I can continue the great work that Sharmen has done," Ellison said in an interview. "There are such wonderful women on that board and the staff."

In addition to her work with the Atlanta Girls School, Ellison also served as president and executive director of Literacy Action from 2006 to 2011.

"For me, this is the capstone of my career," Ellison said. "It feels like the culmination of all the different things I've done in my life."

Ellison said that YWCA's mission of empowering women and girls parallels the work that she has been doing at the Atlanta Girls School. The YWCA's board has charged her to "increase the donor base, to create more partnerships and to have greater outreach." She also said that she expects the organization will be working on a new strategic plan soon after she comes on board.

Also, for Ellison, this will be an opportunity to work with an organization that is more than 100 years old. The YWCA of Greater Atlanta was founded in 1902, and it has a long history in the community.

By comparison, local leaders began working to create the Atlanta Girls School in August 1997, and the school opened three years later. Currently, Joan King is serving as interim head of the school, and a search is underway for a new head to start for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Ellison, 61, thought it would be a good idea for her to step down from her position at the school because she didn't want to be a "detriment" in the search for a permanent head because of her history with the school. Also, the fundraising efforts are in good shape with 98 percent of the parents contributing to its annual fund. Ellison said she plans to find her successor before joining the YWCA.

"I am thrilled," Ellison said of her new role. "I hope I will be there for a nice long tenure."

TURKNETT LEADERSHIP AWARD.

Alana Shepherd, co-founder of the Shepherd Center, will receive the second Lifetime Achievement Award for Leadership Character from the Turknett Leadership Group.

Shepherd, who continues to serve on the hospital's board, will be honored at the 10th annual Leadership Character Awards ceremony on Wednesday, Sept. 18, at the Georgia Aquarium.

The only other recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award has been Frank Skinner, a retired CEO of BellSouth Telecommunications, who received the honor in 2012.

"Alana has worked as an advocate for neurological healthcare in Atlanta for over 40 years," according to Turknett's statement. "Along with husband Harold and son James, Alana founded Shepherd

Center after James sustained a paralyzing spinal cord injury in 1973. Frustrated by the lack of state-of-the-art rehabilitation care in the southeastern United States, the family galvanized support among the Atlanta community to open a specialty facility."

Thanks to Shepherd's leadership, the center grew from a six-bed facility to an internationally recognized 152-bed rehabilitation hospital for people with spinal cord injury, brain

injury and other neurological conditions. She also was instrumental in bringing the Paralympic Games to Atlanta in 1996.

A panel of judges selected Shepherd as the winner of the award.

CAMP TWIN LAKES. About 500 friends and supporters of Camp Twin Lakes celebrated the nonprofit's 20th anniversary on April 21 at its Camp Rutledge.

In its 20 years, Camp Twin Lakes has served 50,000 children and young adults with serious illnesses, disabilities and other life challenges. The following day, Camp Twin Lakes also held its Celebrity Golf Tournament at East Lake — all as a way to celebrate its 20th year and as a way to help raise money for the camps.

"We had two really great days," said **Eric Robbins**, executive director of Camp Twin Lakes. "We started in 1993 with seven partners, and today we have 60 partners." There are now three camps — Camp



Rutledge, Camp Will-A-Way and Camp Dream in Warm Springs.

Robbins said businessman **Doug Hertz** deserves credit for the initial vision for the camps, and he remains

involved with the nonprofit. Camp Twin Lakes continues to subsidize the costs of camps by about 80 percent. Campers do pay a modest fee, but those fees have not increased in

20 years. The nonprofit's \$4 million annual operating costs are supported by individuals, corporations and foundations; and it has to raise about \$2.3 million a year to cover its operations. Reach Saporta at (404) 736-3612 or maria@saporta.biz

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