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Dubuque Community Y names new president/CEO, who sees opportunity for organization to take 'leadership role'

BY JEFF MONTGOMERY jeff.montgomery@thmedia.com 54 min ago

Tony Calabrese is proud to call himself “a career Y person.”

For the next chapter of his professional journey, Calabrese will move about 70 miles north to take the reins of Dubuque Community YMCA/YWCA.

The local Y’s Board of Directors announced tonight that it has selected Calabrese to become the organization’s next president and CEO. Calabrese has spent the past two decades working for Scott County Family Y in the Quad Cities, including serving as president and chief operating officer for the past fourteen years.

“This is my 30th year overall in the YMCA,” he said. “I am a career Y person, and I have had a great, fortunate experience. I am really looking forward to the new opportunities and challenges in Dubuque.”

Calabrese, who turns 54 this week, will assume his new role on Feb. 18. He fills a vacancy created with the resignation of Sharon Covey in September.

More than 30 candidates applied for the position. Wendy Knight, president of the Y’s board, said she was “pleasantly surprised” by the degree of interest the position received, noting that there was both local and national interest.

Ultimately, Calabrese emerged as the ideal fit.

“(Scott County Family Y has) done some great things in terms of increasing membership and the transformation of the Y in their community,” Knight said. “I also think he has a strong mindset for talent development and developing our current employees.”

Knight said Calabrese is arriving at a “transformational moment.” It is in the midst of a \$20 million capital campaign to fund construction of a new facility, which will span approximately 65,000 to 70,000 square feet. The multipurpose community, wellness and aquatic center will be constructed on the site of the Y’s current location at 35 N. Booth St.

Calabrese is confident the new facility will be an asset.

“The community deserves a modern and clean facility,” he said. “It will allow us to be more relevant and competitive in the market.”

During Calabrese’s time in the Quad- Cities, the Scott County Family Y opened five new branches.

Calabrese noted that the Y partnered with local school districts, an area health facility and a city government to make these projects possible.

“I’m really looking forward to finding opportunities in Dubuque to do similar collaborations,” he said.

Calabrese believes that the relationship between the Y and the community is essential to the organization's progress.

He emphasized that he would like to see the Y take "a leadership role" in meeting the community's needs. For example, Calabrese thinks the Y could help fill a void in Dubuque by beefing up its child care and after-school programming.

"The YMCA is a charity," he said. "We need to make sure people don't just see us as a swim-and-gym. It is very important that the community understands our mission, our brand and our role in the community."

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