

YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley
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Alliance of New York State YMCAs Stronger Together

New York Secretary of State Recognizes YMCA's "A Better Place" as a Multi-Media Movement

When the Alliance of New York State YMCAs met in Albany on Wednesday, October 16, 80 YMCA representatives celebrated their collective efforts to strengthen the YMCA's mission to build healthy communities in mind, body, and spirit.

"A Better Place," a project born in the YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley (Rome and Oneida) and features YMCAs from across the state, was recognized with an honorable citation from Governor Kathy Hochul.

While presenting the Executive Chamber citation to YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley CEO Hank Leo, Secretary of State Walter T. Mosley said, "The mission of the Y reminds me of our mission at the Department of State: to bring people together, foster community, and create opportunities where there might not be opportunities."

"This universal message is highlighted in the "A Better Place" multi-media movement and is reflective of our motto at the Department of State, '*Opportunity Starts Here*,'" Mosley continued.

The "A Better Place" project brings artists, partners, and Ys from around the world to collaborate on a global multi-media effort, featuring three new, original songs and music videos, a series of educational children's books, an adaptive curriculum and a full-length movie, all by the same name. The project brings universal hope, unity, and faith during times when it is most needed. The first song, with original lyrics that take listeners through an emotional journey highlighting the sadness of times during the Covid-19 pandemic and the soaring highs of using hope, faith and finally coming together to overcome differences, is only the beginning of what is unfolding into a major global multi-media project, with two additional songs, three children's books, music videos, a curriculum, and even a documentary. Fittingly, the YMCA has added representatives from the United Nations to the fold.

The first song was co-written by Matthew Beadle, a music teacher at the YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley in 2020, and shepherded by Leo, to help raise funds for the Y as it lost a considerable amount of funding due to the pandemic, but also to help a struggling music program in Uganda. Through Leo's contacts, cold calls, and partnerships with other national and international YMCAs, the creators gathered regional, national, and international musicians, recording



NY Secretary of State presents citation from Gov. Hochul to YMCA CEO Hank Leo, acknowledging the launch of "A Better Place," stating it is a multi-media movement that encourages the world to foster positivity in the wake of difficult times.

artists, athletes, poets, animators, and other collaborators all inspired to lend their unique talents to what is now a multi-media project.

Through the international language of music, the song aims to help heal racial divides, challenge pre-conceived opinions, and question cultural judgments. The education-based project, which includes a children's book series and curriculum, now features over 40 YMCAs, partners, and collaborators.

Beadle, regional and California-based lead vocalist "ZZ" Zainep Abdelaal, and curriculum developer Dan Eddy of Mohawk Valley Community College in Utica, NY also attended the Alliance meeting.

Rob Totaro, Director of Member Advancement of the Alliance of New York State YMCAs, Inc. has been instrumental in building the "A Better Place" website, www.abetterplaceproject.org with links to all project collaborators.

"The Alliance of New York State YMCAs was honored to spotlight the 'A Better Place' project and its enduring message of healing, connection, and hope at the Stronger Together Annual Meeting. We were deeply grateful to Secretary of State Walter T. Mosley for attending to present the YMCA with a Citation from Governor Hochul to recognize the project. Secretary Mosley has had a long history of public service throughout his career and as a strong supporter of the YMCA and its mission to serving and strengthening communities. We were honored to have him present the citation on the Governor's behalf and look forward to future collaborations with the Department of State, both with this project and in the future," said Kyle Stewart, Executive Director, Alliance of New York State YMCAs.

"I am proud to serve as a member of the Alliance, which does some incredible work to further the YMCA's priorities in New York. By educating our elected officials on the impact that Ys have on hundreds of thousands of lives, we help make New York a better place, too," said Leo. "We are so thankful for the collaboration and partnership of the Alliance team and staff, especially for this project, and grateful for the Governor's recognition of what can become a far-reaching movement toward peace and understanding."

About the Project: *"A Better Place" is a YMCA global project encompassing original music, a documentary, children's books and curriculum designed to help spread joy and positivity during challenging times. Its mission is to teach kids and adults the value of understanding, accepting and loving the unique differences of others from all around the world through song, a film documentary, children's books and corresponding curriculum.*

The official release of the song and full music video took place on September 21, with a download on Play it Forward. To view the music video trailer, visit the YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley's YouTube channel @ymcaofthegreatertri-valley or Facebook page Facebook/ymcagreatertrivalley to see the video trailer. The first of three books is now in print and available through Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Better-Place-Hank-Leo>.

About the YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley: *The YMCA of the Greater Tri-Valley serves the greater Rome, Oneida, and Whitesboro areas with programs and services for the whole family. We are a 501c3 charitable non-profit organization with two primary branches in Rome and Oneida and school-age childcare in the Whitesboro area. The Y's mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.*

For further information and interviews, please contact:

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