September 2019: A Recent Conversation with Scott Dolfi

“These words, spoken by Scott Dolfi, were the theme of my recent conversation with the new President and CEO of the YMCA Retirement Fund.

I first met Scott when he came to New York for his interview with members of the Fund’s CEO Search Committee.

Much of the Committee’s initial work was to develop a profile of the skills and experience that were highly desirable in a new CEO. The profile included characteristics such as being an excellent communicator and a strategic thinker. The ideal candidate would demonstrate a high level of emotional maturity with proven management and leadership skills.

The successful candidate also needed to have well-rounded financial and investment experience, with a good working knowledge of pension dynamics. By May, the Search Committee reached a consensus on Scott Dolfi as the new CEO of the Fund, and the Board agreed unanimously.

Throughout Scott’s candidacy, what came through in every encounter was his consistent ability to understand the essential elements of leadership: a focus on continual learning, an emphasis on achieving results, empowering staff, and being responsive to customer needs as means to collectively achieving critical organizational goals.

As one of his references shared, “Scott is a born leader who genuinely cares for the people with whom he works. He really listens and always thinks and reflects before he speaks.”

I spoke with Scott after he returned from the YMCA General Assembly in Anaheim. Here is some of that conversation.

REID: Did any specific questions you received from attendees at the General Assembly surprise you?

SCOTT: Yes, to a degree. Just about every question I was asked by current active participants in the Fund related to interest rates applied to individual accounts. Certainly, interest credit decisions are important to participants. However, one of the most significant benefits of the Fund is the rate at which individual balances are converted to a participant’s lifetime monthly annuity check when a Y staff member retires.

REID: Any other impressions from the General Assembly?

SCOTT: During the interview process as well as from my own research I was extremely impressed by the quality of men and women who volunteer on the Fund’s Board of Trustees. At the General Assembly I met hundreds of Y volunteers and board members who contribute time, money and influence to enable their Ys to extend the Y’s services far beyond what only paid staff could accomplish. That’s when I realized just how impactful the work of local Ys are in creating strong, welcoming communities. When I decided to pursue new executive opportunities I felt, at this point in my life, I wanted to be a part of a mission-based organization. The volunteers I have met confirmed I made the right decision to join the Y. My goal now is to reaffirm that the Fund’s Board of Trustees made a good choice in hiring me as the CEO of the Fund.

REID: What are some of the first things you have already started doing at the Fund?

SCOTT: Since my first days at the Fund I’ve been meeting with every staff member, getting to know as much as each individual was comfortable sharing: their interests, skill set, what they do today and what they might want to do in the future. From my perspective, that’s an ongoing process. I’ve also begun to meet with YMCA CEOs around the country. The General Assembly gave me a great head start in that process but it will be ongoing. I suspect I’ll be pretty busy over the next year or so meeting Y people throughout the country.

As our conversation ended I thanked Scott for his time on behalf of all YMCA retirees and wished him every success.

- Reid S. Thebault, Retiree Liaison