

# BUSINESS PROFILES

## The YMCA's new CEO James Sanger, Jr.: Building strong communities and strong relationships

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Chat with Jim Sanger is a glowing reminder of why most of South-west Florida's population moved here in the first place. As a veteran of the YMCA world but a newcomer to Lee County, he is thrilled about the beach, the weather, the beautiful outdoors and the people in our community - things we should all notice and be grateful for every day.

Certainly Lee County will welcome Jim just as enthusiastically. With more than 18 years of experience in YMCA operations, fundraising and strategic planning, his vision is to elevate the YMCA of Lee County to one of the largest Y's in the state, a position he feels confident he and his team can achieve. He plans to reach that milestone by creating a much more relationship-driven philosophy, focusing both on renewing old relationships and cultivating new ones.

"The YMCA consists of people, not facilities," says Sanger. "And even if our budget isn't as large as some other Y's, ours is extremely rich in people."

Sanger's short-term goals include improving operational issues and among his long-term objectives are to finish the

Y's capital campaign by Christmas and to move on with expansion plans by 2008. He says they are currently at 70 percent of where they need to be.

We have a lot of great people involved," says Sanger. "But we need to concentrate on building even better relationships. We're getting out into the communities, talking to people, doing more to accomplish our objectives."

Relocating to Fort Myers from York, PA, Sanger served as vice president of operations for the YMCA of York and York County. There he was responsible for a \$5.2 million budget.

A York native, Sanger played college baseball, majored in fitness management and even played semi-pro ball. The first time he set foot in the local Y was for his first job where he rose from corporate fitness director all the way through the ranks until he was ready to be CEO. Since the York CEO was in for

a long tenure, Sanger started looking elsewhere and Lee County matched his family's needs perfectly.

"We wanted to go somewhere warm," Sanger explains. "My wife Lori was originally from Fort Lauderdale so coming to Florida was like coming home for her. And our children, Brendon (13) and Logan (11) are happy with the move."

The Sanger family has already planted Lee County roots - they have a home in west Fort Myers and wife Lori will soon begin teaching at Hancock Creek Elementary.

"Our family is sports-oriented and we love to be outdoors - everything just fell into place and we are ecstatic to be here." ■

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Sanger, Jr.

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