

## From Lifeguard to Board Chair

September 2022

Buras, Louisiana, a small town 90 minutes south of New Orleans with one traffic light, is best known for commercial and sports fishing. It's also the hometown of the Board Chair of the YMCA of Greater New Orleans, Rachel Cox Rodi, who grew up going to our Buras YMCA.

From the beginning, Rachel knew the YMCA was about family. Some of her first memories are of her Dad dropping her off at art, swim, and dance lessons while he would work out in the gym.

Rachel started taking swim lessons at age 5, eventually having her first job by age 15, as a part time lifeguard at the YMCA.

"Starting at the Y as a lifeguard, getting trained in CPR and First Aid and realizing as a teenager that you have people's lives literally in your hands...that helps you to grow up a little bit," Rachel said. And that "lifeguard" state of mind is not just part-time...it's a lifelong commitment."

Rachel ended up being promoted to swim instructor and eventually aquatics coordinator of the Buras Y pool. During her time in college, she drove home every summer from Loyola in New Orleans to work at the Buras Y. After graduate school at Tulane and an early career in marketing and public relations, Rachel returned to the Y, serving as the District Vice President, overseeing South Plaquemines, Belle Chasse, and the east bank.

"Moving forward in my career, all the little jobs I had at the Y grew into larger roles," Rachel said. "These jobs taught me to manage staff and time and set the groundwork for me as a professional. I had an advantage over my peers who had jobs that didn't have the leadership element that the Y jobs naturally do." Rachel stopped working full time at the Y in 2013 to devote her time to family





life and the education of her children, but she has not stopped volunteering. Not only does she serve as the Chair of the Board of Trustees for the YMCA of Greater New Orleans, but she also serves on the Belle Chasse Y advisory board, is a certified spin instructor, teaches swim lessons over the summer, and coaches Girls on the Run at the Belle Chasse Y.

Rachel and her husband, Dr. Jake Rodi, are high school sweethearts and are raising

three precious daughters – Isabella, Ava, and Ellie. The girls are active with YMCA youth sports and programs and love spending time at the YMCA. Jake is a family physician in Belle Chasse and encourages others to join the Y’s Actively Changing Together program that promotes healthy living.

“The Y is part of our extended family. It’s my girls’ second home. My daughters are already looking forward to becoming lifeguards and camp counselors. It’s part of who we are.”

As board chair, Rachel wants to continue to expand the Y’s presence in the community and ensure that the Y remains a leading partner for nonprofits, schools, business communities, and local governments.

“When I stopped working full time, my heart still wanted to see our local YMCA’s succeed. It’s important to show our daughters that women can lead, and the Y develops leaders.”



For more information about the YMCA of Greater New Orleans and to stay up-to-date with community programs and events, join our mailing list or follow us on social media:



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