



## **Lund: A role model for exemplary community service**

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By Eliezer Rodriguez, Esq.

My dear friend, Dr. Elias Karmon, affectionately known as “Mr. Bronx,” introduced me to The Bronx YMCA in 2005. “Mr. Bronx” was a big supporter of the Bronx Y and in 2006 he said to me, “Eliezer, I want you to take my place on The Bronx Y Board of Managers.” The gymnasium and the indoor swimming pool at The Bronx Y are named after Dr. Elias Karmon. I answered “yes” and I have been saying “yes” to the Y ever since.

“Mr. Bronx” witnessed my joining The Bronx Board of Managers before his passing in 2008 at the young age of 98. In 2010, the new executive director for The Bronx Y, Sharlene Brown, introduced me to Jack Lund, CEO and president of the Greater New York YMCA. It was a pleasure to meet the number one person in the biggest Y in the USA. Jack made an immediate good first impression. It turned out that Jack does not only “talk the talk,” he “walks the walk.” Jack has made me feel great about my service to the Y and I am glad that I was asked to volunteer.

Since meeting Jack, I have served on various committees before being selected in 2012 to a three year term as chairman of The Bronx Board of Managers. In 2013, and then again in 2015, I was appointed to serve a one year term on the board of directors for the Greater New York YMCA. Under Jack’s leadership, several Ys have been renovated and he even managed to build a few new Ys in his ten-year tenure.

Over the years, I have been constantly advocating for a second Y for The Bronx. The only Bronx Y is located at 2 Castle Hill and it is too remote for most Bronxites to visit. In late 2013, Jack told me that an announcement was going to be made that a new Y will be built in the South Bronx and he asked me to attend the press event in his absence. The new YMCA will be part of a mixed-use development to be known as “La Central,” located in the Bronxchester urban renewal area bordered by Bergen and Brook Aves. and E. 149th and 153rd Sts. The new development will include five new buildings comprising a total of 985 low and moderate income affordable housing units, along with a host of new retail, community and recreation spaces.

The new branch’s 48,000 s/f facility will feature a state-of-the-art aquatics center, fitness studios, wellness center, and community spaces. The branch will offer a range of programs catering to all age groups, including: afterschool programs, summer camp, an award-winning diabetes prevention program, and more. Phase I of the development has begun and will include construction of the YMCA.

The YMCA of Greater New York has proposed building a third Y for The Bronx. It’s no secret that The Bronx is faced with many health issues and will benefit immensely from the many services a third Y has to offer. Jack has been a great friend to The Bronx and I know it concerns him that The Bronx continues to be ranked the least healthy County in New York State. It is my hope that The Bronx leadership does all it can to move that proposal forward. Y? Because our kids are worth it!

Jack has dedicated the past 40 years of his life to helping neighbors that seek a helping hand. At the end of 2014, Jack asked me to meet privately with him. He then shared his plans to retire by mid-year in 2015. The first word out of my mouth was "Y." Anyway, Jack will be missed.

I value Jack's leadership and I know that he is aware that I value him-- Jack the person. Every year at The Bronx-Manhattan North Association of Realtors' (BMNAR) Annual Banquet, one person is presented with BMNAR's prestigious Community Service Award. A nomination letter was sent to Jack asking him if he would accept the award. Now it was Jack's turn to answer.

Jack will be remembered for his dedicated service to humanity and for his compassion. I will have the pleasure of introducing and presenting Jack with BMNAR's Community Service Award on April 22, 2015 at our 91st Annual Banquet at the Marina del Rey. Please make plans to attend the Banquet and help me bid Jack a healthy and happy retirement. Y? Because he earned it and his answer was "yes."

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