



Dear YMCA Leaders, Friends, and Colleagues,

Over the past few weeks, the Northeast Teen Leaders School (NELS) management team in partnership with our host school Springfield College has been monitoring the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and its effect on our communities and YMCAs. Just like so many of our staff, youth and their families, COVID-19 presented the management team and the college with a difficult decision: could we, with reasonable certainty, operate a safe, effective and impactful school program in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak. Our decision was made with our highest priority in mind, the safety and wellbeing of the Spirit, Mind, and Body of all who attend our program.

It was with great difficulty and sadness that we ultimately decided that for the health and safety of our youth, staff and YMCAs we will be unable to host NELS this year. In addition Springfield College also made the difficult decision to cancel all summer programs and camps, which includes the YMCA Northeast Leaders School. Without the ability to complete the necessary prep work, the unknown of what health risks would be present and the lack of a host facility, we are sadly unable to operate the NELS program for 2020.

I recognize this is hard news to hear, especially for the teens who may be looking forward the NELS, for the personal connections it provides and the sense of normalcy it would create. Although we are not going to see each other this summer, I hope staff and teens can lean as confidently as I have on the past connections we've all made and be reassured that the connections yet to be made will be even stronger when we meet at NELS 2021.

I am grateful to all the wonderful staff, youth and YMCA leadership that have supported our Cause of Youth Development. It has been clear that our passion for supporting our communities, especially our youth, will not waiver in the face of challenges such as the one we face now.

Though we find ourselves uncertain of the immediate future, I'm certain we will come out of this stronger, better and more connected. I am saddened that we won't be seeing you and your teens this summer, but excitedly await the 2021 Northeast Leaders School and to see this community become stronger together by staying apart, for now.

Sincerely,

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