

YMCA OBSERVATORY– International Edition

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This publication is sent by e-mail and included in the Internet Site: www.ymca.org.ar. It intends to share, in short, information and ideas with the broad international world of the Young Men’s Christian Association/YMCA. Only ten subjects have been selected to be shared.

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- ***NATIONAL CONGRESS ON CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE***

The NATIONAL CONGRESS ON CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE organized by YMCA entitled “CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: A PRIORITY THAT CALLS FOR ACTION”, was held last November 5. 132 participants attended the Congress, including representatives from several institutions. The agenda covered the following subjects:

- *-Universal Quality Education: An Essential Tool for Inclusion*
- *-Health Prevention: Unsatisfied Demand Higher than Estimated*
- *-Addiction: A Growing Scourge with Far-Reaching Social Consequences*
- *-Violence: Mistreatment, Abuse, and Exploitation that Damage Minds*

Speakers included a former Argentine Minister of Education, the president of a renowned university, the director of the Drug-Addiction Department of one of the largest state hospitals in the country, and the then Minister of Social Development from the Government of the City of Buenos Aires.

- ***PETER POSNER IN ARGENTINA***

Last April, the president of the World Alliance of YMCAs, Peter Posner, and his wife Gill visited YMCA Argentina for a week. He had a full and extensive agenda, including: An interview with the Anglican Bishop in Argentina, Gregory Venables; a meeting with the authorities of the Islamic Center of the Argentine Republic; a meeting with the Board of Directors of YMCA Argentina; a hearing at the Argentine Government House with Marcos Peña, the Chief of Cabinet of the Argentine President; a visit to the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Mario Poli; a meeting with the Minister of Finance, Alfonso Prat Gay; lunch at YMCA headquarters, with the presence of prominent figures of the Argentine public and private sectors; a visit and meeting with the Mayor of the City of Buenos Aires, Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, the secretary general, Fernando Straface, and the Director of Religious Affairs, Federico Pugliese; a meeting with YMCA Argentina volunteers; dinner with the Chairman of the Board of Directors and Secretary General; a visit to YMCA’s offices at La Matanza, where he received a warm welcome by the directors, teachers and students of YMCA’s educational center (preschool, elementary, and secondary education, and the Professional Training Center,) attended by almost 700 students; a meeting at *Sociedad Bíblica Argentina* (SBA) with the president of the Argentine Federation of Evangelical Churches, Néstor Míguez, and with the General Director of SBA, Rubén Del Ré; a meeting with the president of the Cooperation Fund Promotion Institute (*Instituto Movilizador de Fondos Cooperativos*), Edgardo Form; a visit to AMIA offices (*Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina*), where he received a warm welcome by its president, Thomas Saieg, and its executive director, Daniel Pomerantz; an interview with *La Nación* newspaper; a meeting with the President, Program Directors, Professors and Students of ITBA (*Instituto Tecnológico de Buenos*

Aires). He also addressed, in English, 100 people at the main lecture hall of this prestigious institution. The ITBA, closely related to YMCA Argentina, gave him an acknowledgment award for his visit to Argentina and for the work performed by the Young Men's Christian Association/YMCA worldwide. During his entire visit, the World Alliance president was accompanied at all times by the Secretary General of YMCA Argentina, Norberto Rodríguez. The last activity on his agenda was having dinner with four young leaders of the institution with wide international experience: Romina Sarmiento, Mariano Tomeo, Jimena Jauregui, and Maximiliano Cacace.

- ***ARGENTINA'S BICENTENNIAL***

On July 9, Argentina celebrates the Bicentennial of its independence. YMCA Argentina will be part of the celebration of this emblematic event in the history of the country. YMCA invited two hundred leading figures of Argentina's public and private sectors (politicians, trade union leaders, economists, legal scholars, representatives of the culture and education sectors, religious leaders, and civil society representatives) to share their thoughts on the meaning of the Bicentennial looking forward. Based on this material, a book was published entitled: "Thoughts to Consolidate Independence – From the Bicentennial to a Promising Future." The response was extraordinary. The Argentine President, Mauricio Macri, the Vice-President, Gabriela Michetti, as well as governors, presidents of both houses of Congress, and the highest religious authorities from Christianity, the Islam and Judaism, among many others, shared their thoughts.

- ***YMCA ARGENTINA AND ITS RELATION WITH EUROPE***

In May, the secretary general of YMCA Argentina, Norberto Rodríguez, held meetings with the YMCAs from Hungary, Eva Tschornova, and Scotland, with its secretary general, Kerry Reilly and its amazing staff. He also had an interview with the officer of the YMCA European Alliance office in Brussels, Ilenia Ventroni. All this with the support of the European secretary general, Juan Simoes. The experience was very rewarding and enabled cooperation perspectives. Exposing with certainty the international– and, therefore, solidary like family – nature of the YMCA is fundamental.

- ***INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES, EXPERIENCES, AND INTERNSHIPS OF YOUNG LEADERS***

Like every year, the participation/training program of YMCA Argentina's young leaders abroad is intense and 2016 was no exception, as can be seen from the first semester:

- Ariel Wyszengrad: "YMCA Peace Network" Program, in Vancouver, Canada
- Mariano Tomeo: Participated in YMCA Camp St. Croix, United States
- Adriano Baldesari: "Journey for Justice" Program in Palestine.
- Franco Ibarrola: "World Youth Day," in Krakow, Poland, with the presence of Pope Francis

Young leaders from the different YMCAs of Latin America were welcomed during the summer season in tourist centers and camps of YMCA Argentina, namely:

- San Pablo, Brazil, Marina Pires Savioli
- Mexico, Cristina de la Cruz
- Sorocaba, Brazil, Daniele Alves Fogaca
- Peru, Sofía Chunga
- Uruguay, Santiago Demaría and Joaquin Gonzalez

- ***YMCA ARGENTINA EXECUTIVES IN BRAZIL, PERU AND THE U.S.***

Within the framework of the extensive training program, this year, YMCA Argentina expects to implement three internships for its professionals. Two of them – for the YMCAs of San Pablo,

Brazil, and Peru – have already taken place. The internships were awarded to Claudia Martinez, from Human Resources, and Viviana Romano from Education. The third internship was awarded to Juan P. Arias, from Business Management, for the United States and will take place in the second semester of this year.

- ***CONTINUED “THE HOUSE OF ABRAHAM” EXPERIENCE***

On the afternoon of May 3, at the International Book Fair of Buenos Aires, the book “THE HOUSE OF ABRAHAM” (“La casa de Abraham”) was presented. A crowded audience attended the event, organized by the Tesa Foundation. The panel included *Norberto Rodríguez*, secretary general of YMCA Argentina. Also present were the ambassador for Israel, *Dorit Shavit*, and the U.S. ambassador, *Noah Mamet*, who shared some brief reflections. Norberto Rodríguez is one of the ten writers of the book and his chapter is entitled “Youth in Interreligious Dialogue and Social Commitment”. “The House of Abraham” is an interreligious experience that ties Christian traditions (both Catholic and Evangelical) to the Jewish and Islamic ones. The sacred books of the three religions are kept in a common space inside the largest synagogue of Argentina, located in the City of Buenos Aires. YMCA Argentina is the main guest of this initiative. The book presented at the International Book Fair of Buenos Aires is part of this meaningful sign of dialogue.

- ***“YMCA-CITIZENSHIP AND VALUES” AWARD***

On June 2, YMCA Argentina held the 2016 edition of its “Citizenship and Values” Award Ceremony. The event was attended by a large audience at the Stock Exchange of Buenos Aires. The recipient was *Hermenegildo Sábat*, renowned Uruguayan artist who has lived in Argentina for several years now. This award recognizes those whose work contributes to promoting values, the defense of human dignity, the construction of citizenship, and the consolidation of full democracy.

- ***CELLO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL***

With great success, YMCA Argentina held the *VI Cello Latin American Festival* on March 21, 22 and 23. The artistic director and master of the festival was *Eduardo Vasallo*, cello soloist of the Birmingham Symphonic Orchestra and professor at the Royal Northern College of Music of Manchester. This quality event takes place every two years and it brings relevance and distinction to our institution.

- ***FEDERICO PAGURA PASSED AWAY***

Federico Pagura, Bishop Emeritus of the Argentine Evangelical Methodist Church, passed away last June 6. He was a religious leader renowned at the national and international levels. In 1988, he was the main speaker of the World Council of YMCAs held in Aruba. He did it with significant confidence. He was a strong advocate for human rights and people’s dignity, especially the most vulnerable. He was also a fighter for the freedom of peoples. His heart beat in deep Latin America, especially in Central America at very hard times in the region. He had a special affection for the YMCA. When he passed away, he served as chairman of the provisional Board of Directors of the YMCA in Rosario. He will be missed and his memory will live in his deeds.
