

YMCA rebrands itself as 'the Y'

News in the [August 24, 2010](#) issue

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) will now call itself by the shortened name "the Y" as part of its newest brand strategy but officially will still identify itself as the YMCA.

As Mamie Moore, national spokesperson for the YMCA of the USA, said in an interview, "What we're doing is calling ourselves 'the Y' because that's what everybody calls us. [However,] YMCA is still our legal name."

Moore said the change is meant to capitalize on the increasing focus the YMCA is giving to its three core areas of youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

With more than 2,500 centers nationwide, the YMCA will continue its mission to reach out to communities. It is "accurate that we are downsizing to one letter in what we call ourselves, but our mission remains the same," Moore said.

Ironically, the change comes amid a push by some local YMCA affiliates to "light up the C in YMCA," as staffers have described it, with Christian programming, chaplains and even boxes for members' prayer requests.

The YMCA was founded in Britain in 1844, at a time when the Industrial Revolution drew young men to London for work. Founder George Williams and a group of businessmen wanted to offer a Christian alternative to the sordid street life. The first YMCA offered beds, Bible studies and wholesome activities.

The new "Y" branding comes after more than two years of internal analysis and research. The company's logo has also changed to include the organization's full acronym.

"For the past 43 years, what you've seen is the red and black ['Y'] logo," Moore said. "What you'll find now is that for the first time in 43 years, YMCA is embedded in our logo. You can no longer separate the letter Y from YMCA." —RNS