



Ashland Family YMCA Board Member Spotlight

Ty Hisatomi, AFYMCA Board President

Q: How long have you been a board member at AFYMCA?

A: 5 years

Q: What company or organization do you work at now? (If you retired, where did you last work?)

A: I retired from the Y after 30 years of professional service at 5 different YMCAs. The last Y that I worked at was and is the best Y, the Ashland Family YMCA of course.

Q: Where are you from? Where did you go to school?

A: I was born and raised in the South Bay Area, Cupertino, CA which is now the heart of Silicon Valley. I graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara and Southern Oregon University.

Q: Why do you serve on the Board of Directors at the AFYMCA?

A: The simple answer is that someone asked me to serve. My new mantra to navigate life is to think twice before saying no.

Q: What do you like most about being an AFYMCA Board member?

A: We are living in strange and unsettled times. As a board member I feel empowered being an active part in solutions to the many challenges in our region and the world. I have the opportunity to be engaged locally on issues and causes



that are important to me. To have realistic capacity to make positive change happen is a true gift. I am a huge believer in servant leadership and as a board member I am humbly reminded to follow through and walk the talk every day. I believe “Y-Work” has always created a ripple effect of community and hope in all people it touches. As a board member, I like that.

Q: Who/what inspires you?

A: My parents. When I look back at the injustices they, as Japanese-American citizens, endured during a time our nation was at war and the sacrifice, grace and resilience they both displayed after, is and always will be an inspiration to me.

Q: How do you define success?

A: To look back at your life with few regrets knowing you left lots of love, smiles and laughter to family and friends. To have given more than I have taken. To have strived to live life with integrity, to one’s fullest potential and inspired others to do so too.

Q: Do you have any hobbies?

A: I have two “hobbies” which are at opposite ends of the spectrum.

I am a gearhead who loves tinkering on cars, especially old English roadsters which are the ultimate test in one’s patience and resolve. I take great pleasure in fixing, maintaining and driving a good running car. And like most car guys, I think I know more than I really do. Probably the reason I drive Toyotas.

My entire life, I have found refuge in hiking and backpacking. As a teen, two buddies and I backpacked the John Muir Trail down the crest of the Sierra Nevada which started my love and deep appreciation for wilderness. The mountains, forests, deserts and wild places in our country have always brought peace and rejuvenation to my body, mind and spirit. I try to get out in it as much as possible and why I’m dedicated to its protection and preservation.

Q: Who is someone who’s made a big impact on your life? Why?

A: Dr. Don Mitchell, who was my graduate advisor at SOU. He was a master teacher who conveyed understanding of the outdoors as a living laboratory fraught with invaluable lessons on life and living. He was a champion for kids who have special challenges and needs that are often overlooked. He inspired in me the belief that there are solutions to every problem imaginable, but one needs to have patience, hope and the ability to view them from different angles and perspectives.