

Behind the Smiles: YMCA of the Rockies Moral Failure on Mental Health and the Staff Paying the Price

YMCA promotes its Core Values, but when one longtime employee asked for mental health support, he was met with denial, silence, and the unexpected.



Denver, Colorado May 15, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - When Nick Mistretta returned to the YMCA of the Rockies after several years away, it felt like a homecoming. Having worked for the organization on and off for nearly two decades, he believed in the mission and the values it claimed to uphold.

That feeling didn't last.

"I have a condition known as misophonia, which makes me extremely sensitive to certain noises," Mistretta says. "I've always dealt with ADHD, anxiety, OCD, and depression. But as the world gets louder, it's becoming harder and harder to find a safe space."

Misophonia is a neurological condition that triggers intense emotional and physical responses – like panic, stress, or nausea – when exposed to specific sounds such as chewing, pen clicking, or low-frequency vibrations. For Mistretta, the worst trigger is a low, rumbling bass – exactly the kind of noise he now hears daily in his housing assignment.

"I live on the first floor of an old building," he explains. "When people walk around above me, the floor vibrates, and my 24/7 use of headphones is useless. It's exactly the kind of low-frequency noise that sets off my fight-or-flight response. So I asked to be moved into one of a few dozen empty rooms on a top floor."

Mistretta currently volunteers at the YMCA's general store in Estes Park, Colorado. When he realized the housing situation was unsustainable, he asked to speak to housing coordinator Sophie Green but was denied, so instead he submitted a room change request and disclosed his condition. He believed the solution would be straightforward.

"There are two staff housing buildings for older adults like me, and they're both less than half full," he says. "I assumed they'd help. I was wrong."

According to Mistretta, his request was immediately denied with a vague explanation that the available rooms were being held for summer volunteers. But Mistretta is a summer volunteer; his contract runs through the entire season, and he's talked with other senior volunteers with similar complaints of Green. When he appealed to her again, this time asking for understanding, he received no reply. Days later, he was informed that a roommate would be moving in shortly, despite the two buildings remaining largely empty.

"Only three weeks ago, I sat through an all-day orientation where people got up and talked about the YMCA's core values: caring, respect, honesty, responsibility, and faith," Mistretta says. "It's clearly just a script. There's no follow-through."

He says the situation has left him isolated, exhausted, and on edge.

"Keep in mind, I'm not even getting paid. I'm giving my time and labor to a place I once loved, and all I asked for was to be moved into one of many empty rooms."

Mistretta says the situation reflects a broader pattern he's seen throughout his life: religious institutions that preach compassion but fail to practice it.

“I grew up in religious schools and churches. I’ve heard the sermons. I’ve seen how people act behind closed doors,” Mistretta says. “And what I’m seeing here is no different. It’s the same brand of hypocrisy that’s everywhere now – people talking about moral values while completely ignoring them in practice.”

He draws a parallel between his experience at the YMCA and the public support many evangelical institutions have shown for figures like Donald Trump.

“Supporting someone who openly mocks the weak and lies constantly – that’s not Christianity. That’s a marketing stunt,” Mistretta says. “And when I see an organization like the YMCA doing the same thing – parading its values in public while ignoring real people in need, it hits just as hard.”

In the end, he says, what hurts most isn’t the noise or the stress; it’s the betrayal.

“The YMCA says it’s a Christian organization that cares for body, mind, and spirit,” Mistretta says. “But that’s just branding. When someone like me actually needs support, it turns out they don’t practice any of what they preach.”

5/13 Update:

Nick Mistretta left the YMCA of the Rockies on 5/12. General Manager Shannon Jones apologized twice to Mistretta for Sophie Green’s behavior, and said she’s had multiple complaints, but he did not hold her or anyone else accountable. Instead, he made excuses. Jones still preaches to new and returning employees every Monday during orientation while stressing the importance of the YMCA’s core values.

Meanwhile, there are still a lot of empty rooms on the top floors of two employee housing units that Mistretta could have moved into!

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