



YMCA

We build strong kids,  
strong families, strong communities.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Dena Drabek, Director of Communications  
(405) 297-7770 direct  
(405) 464-5112 cell  
[ddrabek@ymcaokc.org](mailto:ddrabek@ymcaokc.org)

## **YMCA Offers Free Heart-Healthy Program for Children**

**OKLAHOMA CITY (February 8, 2010)** – The YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City will offer a free heart-healthy program for children called EmpowerME4Life starting this month at Ys across the metro. The new healthy-living course combats childhood obesity by teaching kids new attitudes, skills and knowledge about eating better and increasing physical activity.

“EmpowerME4Life will reinforce the nutrition and physical activity objectives of health education that the Y already offers through our various youth programs,” said Angela Jones, health and wellness director for the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City. “This program has the potential to be a very impactful, especially in Oklahoma—a state that leads the nation in obesity rates.”

The eight-week program targets kids ages 8-12 and is open to the public, including non-Y members. Each 45-minute session is based on five steps to help kids live healthier lives including:

- Get 60 minutes of physical activity each day.
- Primarily drink water, 1% or fat-free milk and 100% juice with no added sugars.
- Eat fruits and vegetables with every meal.
- Limit television and video games to one to two hours a day.
- Get at least nine hours of sleep every night.

“This program is a great way to help kids develop healthy habits an early age that will stay with them for a lifetime,” Jones said. “We have to start with kids if we’re going to tackle the health crisis in Oklahoma.”

Nearly one in three kids and teens in the nation is overweight or obese. Some experts believe that if obesity among kids increases, our current generation could become the first in American history to live shorter lives than their parents.

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The EmpowerME4Life program was developed to fight childhood obesity as a result of a partnership among the American Heart Association, William J. Clinton Foundation and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. The YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City is offering the program at nine metro Y locations including Bethany, Chickasha, Earlywine Park, Edmond, Downtown, Guthrie, Midwest City and North Side.

“This is a by kids, for kids movement with more than 1 million kids across the country who have joined EmpowerME4Life and committed to eat better and move more,” Jones said. “The national goal is to engage 1 million more kids this year and the Y is working hard to do our part in that effort.”

Local kids who successfully complete EmpowerME4Life will be rewarded for their commitment to making healthier choices at a celebration event during the Y’s annual Healthy Kids Day April 17. Enrollment for EmpowerME4Life is limited. Contact your local Y for program dates, times and registration.

### **About the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City**

The YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City is a charitable, not-for-profit organization that serves children, families and adults of all ages, regardless of gender, race, abilities, or income. Major program areas include aquatic and water safety, youth sports, before and afterschool childcare, camping, health and wellness, teen leadership and community development. The YMCA served nearly 130,000 people in the greater Oklahoma City area last year. For more information please call (405) 297-7777 or visit [www.ymcaokc.org](http://www.ymcaokc.org).