



YMCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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YMCA Taps Community Leaders to Participate in Healthy Initiative

OKLAHOMA CITY (November 17, 2009) — A group of local leaders tapped by the YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City will be traveling to Washington D.C. next month to learn how to stimulate healthy change in communities across the metro. It's part of the YMCA of the USA's Pioneering Healthy Communities (PHC) initiative to bring high-level community leaders together to influence healthy behaviors through environmental and policy change.

The YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City selected seven community leaders to serve on its PHC team. Team members include: Karl Springer, Superintendent of Oklahoma City Public School District, Tricia Everest, Assistant Attorney General; Jackie L. Jones, Executive Director of Central Oklahoma's Turning Point; Raul Font, Assistant Superintendent for Santa Fe South Charter School; Crystal Hedges, Health Promotion Specialist for Oklahoma City County Health Department; Judy Duncan, Director of Physical Activity and Nutrition for Oklahoma State Department of Health and Claudia Barajas, Director of Health Services for Latino Community Development Agency.

"We are proud to have such a well-rounded group of leaders to join us as we together to improve the health of our communities," said Mike Grady, YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City President and CEO. "Having these key people on board is vital to the success of our initiative working here at home."

Team members along with local Y officials will attend the sixth annual PHC national conference Dec. 9-11. The conference will focus on strategies and models for bringing about community solutions that have been replicated nationwide. Nearly two dozen PHC teams from across the country will attend the conference to learn from national experts about evidence-based approaches to respond to public health challenges.

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“We are excited to part of this team focused on ways to help families in our community improve their health,” said Jackie Jones, Turning Point Executive Director. “We at Turning Point believe wellness and prevention are key components if we are to reverse the poor health trends we currently see in Oklahoma City.”

Following the conference, PHC teams will return to their hometowns to address local challenges ranging from devising ways to excite youth and older adults about physical activity, supporting employees in their pursuit of health and well-being, improving school nutrition and access to healthy foods and influencing relevant public policy.

“Our vision for Oklahoma City is for all residents to have the opportunity to increase awareness of their own health status and have easy access to resources that will help them make informed decisions about their personal health and that of their families,” said Angela Jones, YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City, Director of Health and Wellness.

Since its inception in 2004, PHC has successfully helped communities influence systemic changes that affect community walkability, pedestrian safety, access to fresh fruits and vegetables, worksite wellness and physical education requirements in schools. Currently 138 Ys and their communities are participating in healthier community initiatives, like PHC. The YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City is one of 21 Ys across the country selected through competitive review to join the PHC initiative this year.

PHC is part of Activate America, the Y’s response to the nation’s growing health crisis. PHC was developed with expert advice and assistance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Their input is helping to build an infrastructure for replicating model programs and approaches to develop healthy communities nationwide. For more information about Pioneering Healthier Communities visit www.ymca.net/activateamerica.

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.

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