

2010 Strong Kids Campaign Case for Support

This outline is designed to give you, the Campaigner, a model from which to communicate to donors and prospects why the Strong Kids Campaign is important and necessary. It is intended to highlight the charitable nature of the YMCA to donors and can be adapted depending on the unique challenges your community faces.

1. Identify a challenge/problem facing Oklahoma
 - Prevalence of obesity, diabetes, depressions, smoking, or other health problem
 - Children left unsupervised at home after school - between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., risky behaviors such as drug use, gang affiliation, and sexual activity nearly triple among unsupervised youth
2. Identify what can be done to solve or fight the challenge/problem
 - Educate the public on the causes and dangers of obesity and how they can prevent or reverse it.
 - Local and state governments must adopt policies and practices that promote healthy lifestyles in schools and communities as a whole.
 - Parents must be given safe alternatives for after school care and activities.
 - Children need positive role models to demonstrate proper behavior and how to stay safe.
 - Children must be educated on the dangers of drug use, gang activity, and other risky behaviors.
3. Identify ways the YMCA is working to solve or fight the challenge/problem
 - Provides convenient facilities, knowledgeable staff, and a relaxed environment for people to participate in health and wellness programs.
 - Promotes initiatives like Activate America designed to promote healthy lifestyles at home and in the community at large.
 - Operates after school programs where children participate in character development lessons, sports and active games, homework assistance, literacy assistance, science and technology education, and conflict resolution lessons.
 - Provides more than \$1.5 million each year in scholarships for families in need to access programs and services designed to help them get healthier, find safe childcare, learn leadership skills, and succeed in life.
4. Identify ways people can help the YMCA in this mission.
 - Make pledge to the Strong Kids Campaign; ask a friend to make a pledge
 - Ask their employer if they have a Matching Gifts Program
 - Talk to others about the Campaign and the work of the YMCA
 - Invite friends to come for a tour of a Branch or program site
 - Thank donors through letters or phone calls
 - Speak to Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, and other civic organizations on behalf of the YMCA
 - Name the YMCA in their Will or Trust as a beneficiary to provide long-term support

Avoid the temptation to profile donors – people still donate in bad economic conditions if they believe the cause is important.

Avoid the temptation to profile someone in need – not every scholarship recipient is low-income or homeless. Some are middle-class families that have fallen on hard times and need temporary help.

STORIES TO KEEP YOU INSPIRED

At just nine years old, little Jordan has experienced far more than any child should. He watched as his mother became a victim of domestic abuse, which nearly took the life of his unborn brother. As she struggled to free herself and her children from that situation, Jordan's mother fell into a deep depression and was eventually diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. She was crushed by the knowledge that her sons were suffering because she was mentally unable to give them the time and attention they needed. She needed help, but didn't know where to turn.

Jordan's mother learned that the YMCA could provide him the loving, active environment she alone could not. The family received a scholarship that enabled Jordan to attend summer camp where he could meet new friends, play, and be a little boy again. For Jordan's mother, the YMCA was a place where she could exercise and fight the symptoms of her depression. Jordan suffered through a traumatic experience that nearly ripped his family apart. Because of your gifts to the Strong Kids Campaign, you gave him back his innocence and his mommy.

When Shareika, and her two daughters, 10-year-old Ashley and 4-year-old Zoey, were searching for ways they could bond as a family, their choices were limited. The long hours Shareika worked didn't leave her much time to spend with her girls. Putting herself through college at the same time ate into the monthly budget. Shareika needed help.

When Ashley told her mother she wanted to go to YMCA summer camp, Shareika had no idea that she was about to find the place for which she had been searching. The YMCA was a safe, welcoming place where she and her daughters could have fun and get fit together. Because of your gifts to the Strong Kids Campaign, the YMCA was able to provide them a full family scholarship. Ashley learned how to play basketball and has made many friends. Little Zoey learned how to swim. What Shareika is most thankful for are the values of sportsmanship and good character her daughters have learned. She says, "Without the YMCA in our lives, we would have fewer opportunities to interact as a family. It is important to me that my daughters learn how to be good people. The YMCA helps me teach them that."

The children of Pierce and Van Buren elementary schools in the Oklahoma City Public School District face challenges many other children do not. Located in south Oklahoma City's Hispanic community, they battle poverty, language barriers, and hunger. Because their parents work long hours, many find themselves alone at home after school. When boredom, loneliness, and fear settle in, they turn to the one outlet that accepts them – street gangs.

But your gifts to the Strong Kids Campaign give these children a safe alternative to gangs. You help provide scholarships to dozens of families whose children attend YMCA afterschool programs at both schools. These programs emphasize character development, sports and games that promote physical activity, homework assistance and tutoring, literacy assistance, science and technology education, conflict resolution, and social competency. Without you, these children would be lost to the streets. Because of you, we all have hope in their futures.