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QUAD CITY COMMUNITY SELECTED FOR NATIONAL HEALTH & WELLNESS INITIATIVE; YMCA PROJECT FUELS COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO COMBAT OBESITY AND CHRONIC DISEASES

*One of 13 Communities Named 'Healthy Pioneers of Change,'
Spreading Project to 48 Communities Across U.S.*

(Moline, IL, November 30, 2006) – YMCA of the USA, the national resource office for the nation's 2,617 YMCAs, announced that the Two Rivers YMCA and Scott County Family Y have been selected to join the YMCA Activate America: Pioneering Healthier Communities™ project—a major component of the YMCA's national effort to promote healthy living among millions of Americans. The Quad Cities was one of thirteen communities named today, and becomes one of 48 Pioneering Healthier Communities nationwide. Combined with those already engaged in the project, these newly named communities are forming the foundation of an aggressive social movement that is mobilizing leaders in local communities to respond to the public health challenge of obesity, physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

Through this project, launched two years ago, local YMCAs are serving as “connectors,” bringing together high-level representatives from the government, non-profit, and private sectors to drive meaningful change in each of their communities. The Two Rivers YMCA applied for this program and was selected after competitive review process. Dan Osterman, Two Rivers YMCA Executive Director/CEO stated, “I believe our strong volunteer leadership team, the partnership with the Scott County Family Y and the Quad City YMCAs’ history of action and outcomes may have been the determining factor. It is an honor to be one of only thirteen YMCAs selected.” The leadership team includes: Joy Boruff, Ed Carroll, Mary Ellen Chamberlain, Tony Calabrese, Nicole Carkner, Becky Clark, Senator Mike Jacobs, Frank Klipsch, John Kiley, Dr. Victor McAvoy, Dr. Keith Miller, Jerry Jones, Dan Osterman, Larry Patton, Jill Smith, Dr. Jim Spellhaug and Joe Vermeire.

“Pioneering Healthier Communities provides a cohesive response to the disturbing increase of chronic disease and obesity, which are taking a serious toll on our society,” said Neil Nicoll, president and chief executive officer, YMCA of the USA. “Although community-based change is not an overnight process, we’ve already begun to see meaningful transformations take root that will enable us to break the cycle of unhealthy living. None of the success achieved to date would be happening were it not for the team-based approach that is engaging all sectors of society in these communities.”

2006 Pioneering Healthier Communities

YMCAs in 13 communities across the country are convening local leaders this year to respond to public health challenges in these communities: Shasta County YMCA, Redding, Calif.; Central Connecticut Coast YMCA, New Haven, Conn.; Greater Elgin YMCA, Elgin, Ill.; Quad Cities--comprising the Two Rivers YMCA in Moline, Ill., and the Scott County Family YMCA in Davenport, Iowa; YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne, Ind.; YMCA of Greater Louisville, Louisville, Ky.; Bath Area Family YMCA, Bath, Maine; Middle Delmarva Family YMCA, Salisbury, Md.; YMCA of Eastern Union County, Rahway, N.J.; Champaign Family YMCA, Urbana, Ohio; YMCA of Greater Cleveland, Cleveland, Ohio; YMCA of Memphis and the Mid-South, Memphis, Tenn.; and YMCA of the Fox Cities, Appleton, Wisconsin.

Early Community Successes

The first 13 Pioneering Healthier Communities initiated their work in the fall of 2004, and 22 additional communities joined the project in 2005. Their ongoing efforts are focused on various local challenges ranging from devising ways to excite youth and older adults about physical activity, strengthening kids' emotional well-being and improving school nutrition to enhancing the environment to allow for more opportunities for exercise and access to healthy foods, and influencing relevant public policy. Notable successes and accomplishments include:

- **Boulder, Colo.**

Colorado is one of the most physically fit states in the nation. Generally, Colorado youth fall below national averages for risk of becoming overweight. However, the state's youth do not fare nearly as well on the emotional scale. Rates of binge drinking, drug use, depression and thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts put Colorado's young people at alarming risk. Consequently, Activate Boulder County is focusing its efforts on establishing a network of "refueling stations" that provide growth opportunities and support services for teens—primarily middle school youth. This network is being achieved through collaboration among the community, schools, parents, faith groups and youth themselves. Launched in April 2005, the "refueling stations" are serving more than 1,000 middle school youth each week (one of every six youth in Boulder Valley). They're providing growth opportunities and support services that include before- and after-school programs, skateboarding, free art classes, leadership training, bicycling and photography. The program continues to engage new community representatives. For example, local bus drivers were trained to transform their buses into "refueling stations."

- **Des Moines, Iowa**

Nearly 40 percent of Des Moines middle-school children are overweight. In response, Activate Des Moines devised a plan to educate the public about the value of healthy living and decrease levels of childhood obesity in the area. *Trim Kids* is an innovative 12-week program that teaches parents and overweight children to take the steps necessary for long-term healthy living by providing menu ideas, easy exercises and tips for parents so they can encourage their kids. More than 600 individuals have participated to date and are showing excellent, measurable progress. *Trim Kids* is now expanding to 12 new communities. In addition, an appearance by Activate Des Moines before the Des Moines School Board resulted in changes in schools' vending machine and snack policy, which now requires healthier options for kids.

- **Attleboro, Mass.**

Activate Attleboro is creating a healthy generation that hopefully will perpetuate future healthy generations through a variety of activities. The team challenged fourth- and fifth-grade students at four schools to a month-long most-steps competition tied to school subjects. Activate Attleboro is seeking to improve the walkability of a city-wide trail and is planning to expand an extensive bike path system, increasing opportunities for residents to be active. The team also is working with local companies to support walking programs for employees. In order to help educate overweight kids and their parents about healthy nutrition and exercise, Activate Attleboro launched the Physical Activity Club, an intensive one-on-one educational and awareness program for kids who are referred from physicians. This fall, the team plans to kick off a “walking school bus“ program, through which 200 children will walk to and from school instead of relying on their parents for a ride.

- **Rapid City, S.D.**

The Rapid City team is making its community more pedestrian friendly and raising awareness in the community about walking through programmatic and public policy efforts. During the past school year, the team piloted two “walking school buses” and is hoping to begin the program in October. Representatives from the team have actively campaigned for public policies that support walking and biking in Rapid City. For example, the city council recently denied a variance for two developers who wanted to develop a project without sidewalks, thanks in large measure to the advocacy efforts of the Pioneering Healthier Community team.

- **West Michigan**

Activate West Michigan’s mission is to improve the health and quality of life in the region by promoting healthy and active lifestyles among individuals, families and communities. In order to help increase healthy eating and active living among kids, the team created the *Healthy U* health and wellness program to educate inner-city elementary and middle school youth about the importance of nutrition, disease prevention and character development. In partnership with Grand Rapids Public Schools, the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids offered this free, year-round, interactive program at 30 sites last year and served 3,000 kids. Participating youth experienced lower blood pressure and increased flexibility. To improve community access to fresh fruits and vegetables, Activate West Michigan is planting community gardens, starting a farmers’ market, and working with mobile food pantries.

What’s Next for the 2006 Pioneering Healthier Communities

Following the model of the 2004 and 2005 communities, YMCAs in these 13 communities will compose a team consisting of local leaders. These teams will convene at the YMCA Activate America: Pioneering Healthier Communities national conference Dec. 6-8 in Washington, D.C. This third-annual conference will focus on educating these community leaders on strategies and models for bringing about community solutions that have been replicated nationwide. Two dozen experts attended the 2005 conference to educate attendees about evidenced-based approaches to affecting change. These experts included Dr. Julie Gerberding, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Sally Squires of *The Washington Post*, author of “The Lean Plate Club;” Mark Fenton, contributing editor of *Health* magazine and a PBS TV series host; Melissa Johnson, executive director of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports; Tyler Norris, president of Community Initiatives; and Mary Pittman, president of the Health Research and Educational Trust of the American Hospital Association.

For more information regarding YMCA Activate America and the Pioneering Healthier Communities initiative contact: Jill Smith, Wellness Director, Two Rivers YMCA, (309) 797-3945.