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Fran Fyten
fran@reputationpartners.com
(651) 274-5708

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**Milwaukee Y expanding top-rated Early Childhood Education program
and Before- and After-school Care program**

*Programs reaching more than 350 additional local kids
through new community partnerships and locations*

MILWAUKEE – The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee today announced that it has expanded its licensed, five-star rated Early Childhood Education program to serve 60 more children, and added five new Before- and After-school program sites to serve up to 300 more children in the greater Milwaukee area during the 2015-16 academic year.

Early Childhood Education

The Milwaukee Y's top-rated Early Childhood Education program has been expanded to Sherman Park Lutheran School, a Lutheran Urban Mission Initiative, Inc. (LUMIN) school, during the 2015-16 school year. The program will run for 38 weeks during the academic year and is serving 20, three-year-old students.

"LUMIN Schools is thrilled to partner with the Milwaukee YMCA to provide a critical service to our families through the Milwaukee Y's high-quality Early Childhood Education Program," said Dick Laabs, president and CEO of LUMIN Schools. "This service will develop young students who are better prepared for a successful transition to our elementary schools, and we're hopeful to grow the program to serve more families next year after a successful partnership during the 2015-16 academic year."

In addition, the Milwaukee Y has been named a partner agency with Next Door, an established early education provider in Milwaukee, to offer Early Head Start programming. This was made possible through a federal grant awarded to Next Door to spearhead efforts to raise the quality of early education for low-income families with infants and toddlers in the Milwaukee area, and to contribute to workforce development efforts. Through this opportunity, the Milwaukee Y is serving an additional 40 low-income children ages 6-weeks to 3-years-old in its Early Childhood Education program. Parents of children enrolled in the program must be working or in school full-time.

"The Milwaukee Y runs one of the best early childhood education programs in Milwaukee, and we're thrilled to provide them with the support they need to expand their five-star rated program to even more deserving children," said Dr. Carol Keintz, president and CEO of Next Door.

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With the new LUMIN site and the additional children who will benefit from the Next Door grant, the Milwaukee Y is now providing Early Childhood Education services to 150 children during the school year. The program's curriculum uses guided, self-discovery and experiential learning to facilitate cognitive, social, physical and emotional growth and improve the long-term academic potential of infants to five-year-olds. Each child undergoes multiple assessments to track achievement of learning outcomes and performance against developmental benchmarks.

Early childhood education has the ability to close the educational achievement gap between low-income and high-income students before formal schooling begins. Research shows that the average three-year-old, low-income child has three times less the number of words in their vocabularies as children from higher-income families. However, according to the U.S. Department of Education, participation in early childhood programming has been proven to increase high school graduation rates, improve student achievement on standardized tests, and reduce the number of low-income children placed in special education.

"Strong early childhood education programs improve children's long-term development, learning outcomes and high school graduation rates, as well as help decrease delinquency and crime," said Julie Tolan, president and chief executive officer of the Milwaukee Y. "We are proud of our growth in Early Childhood Education and aim to partner with more schools, so that all our young children develop the educational foundations they need to achieve."

The Milwaukee Y's Early Childhood Education program is accredited by the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs, is licensed by the State of Wisconsin and received a five-star rating (the highest possible) from YoungStar, Wisconsin's Child Care Quality Rating and Improvement System administered by the Department of Children and Families.

Before- and After-School Care Expansion

In partnership with Milwaukee-area schools, the Milwaukee Y is expanding its before- and after-school programming to five new sites throughout the greater Milwaukee area, which will serve up to 350 additional students during the 2015-16 academic year. The program provides school-aged children (ages 4-12) with a variety of fun and educational activities designed to help them explore and develop their interests and talents, while receiving homework help and participating in creativity-boosting games and activities.

The Milwaukee Y is offering Before- and After-school Care at the following five new locations:

- Donges Bay Elementary in the Mequon Thiensville School District
- Deer Creek Intermediate School in the St. Francis School District
- Oriole Lane Elementary in the Mequon Thiensville School District
- Rocketship Southside Community Prep
- Wilson Elementary in the Mequon Thiensville School District

"The growth of our Before- and After-school Care program shows the trust our local schools have in the Milwaukee Y to help families and students become healthier, stronger and safer," said April Greenman, director of school-age education at the Milwaukee Y. "Before- and After-school Care gives parents a safe space for their children to learn and grow during the work day and also teaches lifelong lessons and values, such as self-confidence and healthy living habits."

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The Before- and After-school Care program utilizes the Y's healthy living curriculum, which teaches students to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day, participate in less than two hours of screen time and one hour or more of physical activity, and remove sugar-sweetened drinks from their diet. Along with healthy living lessons, Milwaukee Y Before- and After-school Care instructors work to instill the Y's four core values of honesty, caring, respect and responsibility through conversation, activities and special recognition. In the future, the Milwaukee Y plans to partner with additional schools throughout Milwaukee to expand its Early Childhood Education and Before- and After-school Care programs.

With support from generous benefactors and via partnerships with like-minded organizations, the Milwaukee Y is committed to bringing its values-based, life-enriching programming to more people – not just in its centers, but directly into the neighborhoods it serves, through programs like ECE, Before- and After-school Care and:

- Camp FLY, which helps stem summer learning loss through a proven curriculum interwoven into Milwaukee Y day and overnight camps;
- Milwaukee Swims, which helps improve water safety and swim skills to reduce preventable water-related accidents; and
- Healthy Communities, an initiative to deliver programs inside Milwaukee Y centers and out in the community to help improve the physical, social and emotional health of the Y's neighbors.

About the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee

The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee is a powerful association of men, women and children of all ages and walks of life joined together by a shared vision to create a healthier, stronger and safer Milwaukee where families of all incomes and backgrounds truly thrive. Supported by the generosity and vision of our benefactors, the Milwaukee Y offers solutions that reduce health issues that plague our community, such as chronic diseases and preventable injuries; provides safe places seven-days-a-week where kids can have fun, families can gather and seniors can build meaningful connections; serves as an access point for vital community needs, such as preventative health care and reliable, safe before- and after-school care; partners with families, schools and other non-profits to help kids grow into productive adults; and makes fitness fun and accessible for all. Comprising five locations throughout the Milwaukee area, as well as YMCA Camp Minikani on the shores of Lake Amy Belle in Hubertus, Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Y has been a part of the lives of the greater Milwaukee area's kids and families since 1858. For more information, visit www.ymcamke.org.

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