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### **YMCA Leaders and Partners Honored as Champions of Change at the White House**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** (June 7, 2013) – The White House recognized 12 YMCA leaders and Y Partners as Champions of Change today for their efforts in transforming communities and making them better places to live. From addressing child hunger and reducing obesity, to improving education for kids and caretakers, each of the honorees has played an instrumental role in strengthening community.

Created as part of President Barack Obama's Winning the Future initiative, the Champions of Change program features individuals, businesses and organizations that are doing extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities.

Through the Champions of Change program, the White House and YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) have selected individuals who share the Y's commitment to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

"Across America, the Y works every day to address the most pressing social needs of our communities," said Neil Nicoll, president and CEO, Y-USA. "We are able to rise to this challenge thanks to the Champions of Change we are honoring today, and the thousands of Y staff, volunteers and partners nationwide whom they represent."

Honorees represent YMCA staff, volunteers, board members, as well as corporations and foundations that partner with Ys across the country to implement programs and initiatives that support the Y's efforts to nurture the potential of youth, improve the nation's health and well-being, and give back and support neighbors.

Read more about the honorees below.

## **CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE**

The YMCA leaders and partners honored as Champions of Change are:

- **Peggy Brown, Director of Early Childhood Education, YMCA of Greater Cincinnati** – For more than 40 years, Peggy Brown has taught and worked with generations of children and families to promote early childhood education. Brown's hard work and dedication has made a difference in the lives of many. In 2010, the early learning program received the highest Step Up to Quality rating under Brown's leadership. Brown is a great advocate in the community, staying true to the YMCA's mission.
- **Greg Coop, CEO, Moultrie YMCA** – To address the educational needs of the growing number of migrant farm workers in his rural community, Greg Coop launched an early learning readiness program geared toward supporting newcomer and immigrant families. The early learning program model provided support and resources not only to preschool children, but to their informal caregivers who most often were family, friends and neighbors.
- **Mike DeVaul, SVP of Organizational Advancement, YMCA of Greater Charlotte (NC)** – A 28-year veteran of the YMCA, Mike DeVaul is recognized for his community building and diversity work as well as his leadership in supporting the Charlotte Y's global partners in Senegal, Gambia and Jerusalem. DeVaul has also led his association's Global Center of Excellence strategy to ensure that all community members in Charlotte feel welcome at the Y.
- **Julie Gehrki, Senior Director, Walmart Foundation** – Julie Gehrki and the Walmart Foundation serve as a driving force behind initiatives to end food insecurity nationwide. As a champion for solving hunger issues, Gehrki was instrumental in seeing the Y's potential to provide sustainable food service to the nation's most vulnerable children. The Walmart Foundation's support of YMCA food service programs enables Ys to serve nutritious meals to children and teach healthy eating practices in hundreds of communities across the country.
- **Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, President and CEO, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** – Risa Lavizzo-Mourey is a national leader in addressing the nation's most pressing health and health care issues. Under her leadership, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has committed to reversing the childhood obesity epidemic and creating a shared national culture of health. Through its support of the YMCA's Statewide Pioneering Healthier Communities initiative, which addresses childhood obesity through policy, systems and environmental change, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is advancing the creation of public policy and community development geared toward better nutrition and increased physical activity for everyone in America.

- **Scott Menzel, Superintendent, Washtenaw Intermediate School District** – Scott Menzel is an advocate for the Y and its healthy eating and physical activity programs. His support of these YMCA programs offered afterschool and during the summer at schools in Ypsilanti and Willow Run has provided opportunities for more than 600 children to participate in recreational programs to which they might not otherwise had access. Menzel values and supports the Y’s afterschool and summer programs and recognizes their significance for the academic success of his students.
- **Alan Hostrup, President and CEO, YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles** – Alan Hostrup works tirelessly to ensure that every young person has access to YMCA Youth & Government – what he considers a life-changing experience. Hostrup has a long history with the California YMCA Youth & Government program, beginning as a participant during his own high school years and continuing as a volunteer in college and throughout his career. Hostrup recently spearheaded an effort to extend the Youth & Government experience to students in the inner city of Los Angeles. Under his leadership the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles has dramatically increased the number of youth served through its Youth & Government programs as well as fund-raising the necessary money to support that cause.
- **JoAnn Price, Wilson-Gray YMCA, Hartford** – At the Wilson-Gray Y, JoAnn Price has helped to develop a truly remarkable Youth Achievers program, helping youngsters grades five through 12 develop life skills and achieve key educational goals through active engagement with adult role models and mentors. In addition, Price supports the Adult Achievers program, providing parents and grandparents of Youth Achievers with guidance and support regarding a multitude of issues and concerns impacting their wellbeing. As a result of Price’s personal mentoring, every Youth Achiever has graduated from high school and entered on to college.
- **John Urban, Rochester Health Foundation** – As a Y volunteer, and founder and leader of the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, John Urban brings vision and leadership to efforts that improve the health of the Rochester community. Through the foundation, Urban has supported expansion of the YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program; programs to reduce obesity among Hispanics and African Americans; initiatives that encourage healthy behaviors among families and young children; and efforts to transform community environments to provide healthy living opportunities.
- **Dr. William won-kyu Lee, YMCA New American Programs** – Dr. William “Bill” Lee is a renowned cardiologist who has shaped one of the most successful programs in the YMCA through his belief that helping new arrivals succeed will be repaid many times over in our society. Dr. Lee, a YMCA of Greater New York Board member, was the organizing chair of the International branch of the New York City YMCA, which developed programs such as Global Teens, UN programs and

became the incubator and policy body of the Y's New Americans Welcome Centers. These YMCA programs provide services to almost 100 different ethnicities in New York City.

- **Giselle Schneider, Armed Services YMCA** – Armed Services YMCA Operation Kid Comfort – Closely aligned with the White House “Joining Forces” initiative, Operation Kid Comfort is a nationwide, grass roots effort to provide handmade quilts to the children of deployed Moms and Dads. Literally hundreds of volunteer quilters across the country have produced over 25,000 of these quilts since 9-11. Giselle Schneider is the Operation Kid Comfort Program Coordinator at the Armed Services YMCA in Springfield VA. Under her leadership the program and has grown and she has exported this tremendous volunteer opportunity to other YMCA partners and supporting corporations across the country.
- **The Seattle Y's Youth Violence Prevention Initiative** – The Seattle Y's Youth Violence Prevention Initiative is a partnership with the City of Seattle, the YMCA of Greater Seattle's Alive and Free Street Outreach Program, A Better Seattle, law enforcement and other local community providers. This collaboration is focused on strategies to reduce youth and gang violence and build healthy communities in Seattle and surrounding areas. The Youth Violence Prevention Initiative has created a culture of safety and hope for at-risk youth and is now being replicated in five additional cities throughout the Greater Seattle community.

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### **About the Y**

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the U.S., 2,700 Ys engage 21 million men, women and children – regardless of age, income or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in more than 10,000 communities, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. [ymca.net](http://ymca.net)

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