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YMCA OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

YMCA OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Award-winning program: Youth & Family Services
Mike Osoff, Community Collaborations Project Director

Kim S. Morgan, Executive Director
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CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2007 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

A CORNUCOPIA OF COLLABORATIONS FOR FAMILIES

San Diego's Balboa Park is a cultural mecca of museums, elaborate gardens, diverse neighborhoods and the famed San Diego Zoo. But it is also a community with great economic disparity, teen prostitution and drug abuse. In Balboa Park and throughout San Diego County, the YMCA of San Diego County's Youth & Family Services runs a cornucopia of community-driven programs for families based at the Balboa Family Resource Center. From afterschool programs for children to support groups for grandparent caregivers, Youth & Family Services addresses the needs of both parents and youth to help families achieve success. Through numerous community partnerships, Youth & Family Services reaches more than 40,000 people annually with free services that build financial literacy and parenting skills, match mentors to children of prisoners and encourage community members to advocate against drugs.

"Partners not only enhance programming—they also are imperative to effectively serve families," says Mike Osoff, Project Director of Community Collaborations for Youth & Family Services. "By developing a supportive community network, families can receive all the support they need to achieve their goals."

WITHOUT A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY OR FAMILY, YOUTH ARE AT GREATER RISK OF NOT REACHING THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL. THAT IS WHY WE PROVIDE SO MANY DIFFERENT SERVICES—FROM MENTORING TO PARENTING CLASSES—TO MORE FULLY MEET FAMILIES' NEEDS.

—Mike Osoff, Project Director of Community Collaborations, YMCA of San Diego County Youth & Family Services

SERVING INFANTS, GRANDPARENTS AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN

Through the Kinship Support Services program, Youth & Family Services serves a growing population of grandparents and extended relatives who are primary caregivers for children. Case managers visit families' homes and assess their needs, connecting caregivers to community resources and advising them on issues such as enrolling children in school, getting children's Social Security cards and applying for summer camp scholarships. Support groups in Spanish and English also allow caregivers and children to socialize and support each other. Nearly 700 caregivers have found advice, referrals and resources through this program, and 96 percent of participating caregivers and children have remained together, instead of entering foster care.

In the Teen Link Community Project, adolescents take classes in sex education, leadership and positive decision-making, while their parents are offered classes in both Spanish and English that cover parenting skills, stress management and communication. The program includes parenting classes for teen mothers and fathers.

Youth & Family Services also strives to support parents in their absence, with youth aging out of foster care and children of incarcerated parents. The Independent Living Skills program offers case management and courses in financial literacy, job readiness and life skills for foster youth. Y-Friendz reaches out to parents in prison who want their children to have a positive adult mentor. "With all of the challenges that parents and youth face, we have partners and programs to support them, so that success is within reach," Osoff says.

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and YMCA of the USA, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize local YMCAs with outstanding programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.

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YMCA OF GREATER INDIANAPOLIS

URBAN MISSION BRANCH

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

YMCA OF GREATER INDIANAPOLIS-URBAN MISSION BRANCH

Award-winning program: Young Parents' Skills and Support
Benjamin Meadows, Senior Program Executive

Eric Ellsworth, President and CEO
615 N. Alabama Street, Suite 400
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-269-6065
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2007 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

HELPING TEEN PARENTS BECOME BETTER PARENTS

Twenty years ago, the Young Parents' Skills and Support program was created in response to a study revealing that Indianapolis had the nation's highest black infant mortality rate. The YWCA in Indianapolis began holding weekly classes for pregnant teens at their schools. When the YWCA closed in 2002, the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis-Urban Mission Branch adopted the program, expanding the program's reach. The YMCA now offers sessions during the school day in 15 Indianapolis high schools, serving more than 450 students—all of whom are from low-income families. It is the county's only program that provides school-based parenting services to teens.

"Although the black infant mortality rate has declined over the years, there are still many young teen mothers and fathers who need comprehensive support so they can have healthy pregnancies and successfully provide for their children," says Cheryl Hall-Russell, Assistant Vice President of Urban Services. "From medical care and parenting advice to education and employment help, we try to help parents in all that they need to help their families succeed."

WHEN TEENS BECOME PARENTS, THEY DO NOT ALWAYS KNOW WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP. WE DO ALL WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT YOUNG MOTHERS AND FATHERS HAVE THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO RAISE HEALTHY BABIES AND BUILD POSITIVE FUTURES FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN.

—Cheryl Hall-Russell, Assistant Vice President of Urban Services, YMCA of Greater Indianapolis

FROM DIAPERS TO DISCIPLINE

In weekly sessions held throughout the academic year, young parents—from newly pregnant moms to fathers of toddlers—come together to learn about more than 30 topics, including labor and delivery, discipline, financial management and domestic violence. A social worker assesses young parents' needs when they start the program and provides connections to community resources, including counseling, vouchers for baby supplies, health insurance, and food assistance. Sessions are held during study halls and free periods so they are easily accessible and reinforce the importance of education. "We want young parents to stay in school, graduate and be prepared for college and jobs," says Hall-Russell. "By meeting them in schools we are sending the message that they can accomplish their goals, and we can help."

All participants complete individualized parenting plans that address common challenges such as how they will discipline their children, how they will care for the children's basic needs and how they will pursue further education or employment after high school. Partners also extend further services to program participants. The Indianapolis Birthing Project provides parenting education in the students' homes and year-round mentors for young moms, Mothers of Preschoolers provide summertime and afterschool support, and the Raphael Health Center helps uninsured teen parents get health care.

Parents also find support in each other. Graduates of the program often continue to attend sessions and share advice with new parents. "The young moms really value the social support of their peers," Hall-Russell says. "They become like a second family."

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YMCA OF CENTRAL MARYLAND

Award-winning program: Family Strengthening Philosophy
Chris Ader-Soto, Vice President of Child Care and Family Services

John Hoey, President and CEO
20 S. Charles Street, 6th Floor
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410-837-9622
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YMCA OF CENTRAL MARYLAND

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2007 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

WHOLE FAMILY CARE

For the past 30 years, the YMCA of Central Maryland has served the Baltimore area's most disadvantaged neighborhoods with affordable child care, preschool and Head Start programs. In working with children, the YMCA has recognized many challenges faced by the children's families—poverty, homelessness, single mothers, teen parents, domestic violence and limited education. That is why the YMCA deliberately began focusing on supporting parents and strengthening families of the 4,500 children in its child care programs. "Families have issues and obstacles that must be addressed for the children to be successful academically, socially and emotionally," says Chris Ader-Soto, Vice President of Child Care and Family Services. "Quality child care depends on quality care for the entire family."

The YMCA works extensively with parents who have young children in its child care programs and also single mothers who live with their children in YMCA's transitional housing program, the Geraldine Young Family Life Center. With support in education, job readiness and accessing community resources, the YMCA helps parents achieve greater stability for their families.

BEYOND CHILD CARE, WE REALIZE THE NECESSITY OF CARING FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY TO ENSURE CHILDREN'S FUTURE SUCCESS. THAT IS WHY WE SUPPORT PARENTS AS THEY STRIVE FOR GREATER ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND BRIGHTER FUTURES.

—John Hoey, President and CEO of the YMCA of Central Maryland

HEAD START FOR CHILDREN, JUMP START FOR MOM

The Geraldine Young Family Life Center is making a significant difference in the lives of formerly homeless families. Since opening five years ago, all 19 graduates of the 18-month residential program have remained employed and obtained steady housing. While living at the center, mothers earn their GEDs, receive counseling and substance abuse treatment, take financial literacy classes and learn job skills with support from YMCA partners like the Baltimore City and County health departments, the House of Ruth and Family Tree. "With more than 150 partners throughout central Maryland, we can effectively connect families to services they so desperately need," Ader-Soto says. "Partners are crucial to making a difference for these families. No one agency can do it alone."

When families register for one of the YMCA's 18 Head Start programs, they are assigned a family service worker who assesses needs and helps parents develop a Family Partnership Agreement outlining their goals and plans. The family service worker also helps parents access resources such as food stamps, immunizations and housing referrals. For parents seeking work in child care, the YMCA offers a tuition-free, 90-hour child care certification course. More than half of the YMCA's Head Start staff members are Head Start mothers who completed the program.

"When parents are working on their own development, receiving the support they need and partnering with us to inspire their children, the children are more likely to be successful," says President and CEO John Hoey.

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

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YMCA OF METROPOLITAN MINNEAPOLIS

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

YMCA OF METROPOLITAN MINNEAPOLIS

Award-winning program: Minnetonka Heights Community Enhancement Program
Amanda Larson, Community Program Director
JoAnne Robinson, Program Director

Brian Kirk, Executive Director
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Minnetonka, MN 55305
952-544-7708
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2007 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

A MINI UNITED NATIONS

Thirteen miles west of Minneapolis, the city of Minnetonka is home to a growing number of new immigrant families from around the globe—Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iran, Russia, Mexico, Cambodia and China. Two-thirds of Minnetonka residents who receive public assistance—including many immigrant families—live in subsidized housing in the Minnetonka Heights neighborhood. In 2001, the Ridgedale branch of the YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis partnered with eight other community agencies in the Minnetonka Family Services Collaborative to form a new program to support Minnetonka Heights families. The Minnetonka Heights Community Enrichment Program (MHCEP) helps families achieve greater economic success, facilitates better access to community resources and helps build community among diverse residents who collectively speak more than 10 languages.

The Ridgedale YMCA leads MHCEP with programs ranging from after-school clubs and computer training to parenting classes and community celebrations. MHCEP programs are offered to all of Minnetonka Heights's more than 500 youth, parent and senior citizen residents.

WITH SUCH A CONCENTRATION OF FAMILIES NEEDING ASSISTANCE IN MINNETONKA HEIGHTS, WE KNEW WE COULD BE HELPFUL BY BEING IN THE COMMUNITY, ACTING AS A BRIDGE TO RESOURCES AND EMPOWERING PARENTS WITH FINANCIAL EDUCATION, PARENTING CLASSES AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING EVENTS.

—Amanda Larson, Community Program Director, YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis

AN IMMIGRANT THANKSGIVING AND DENTISTS ON WHEELS

To eliminate the challenge of limited transportation options, MHCEP reaches families in their own neighborhood, partnering with agencies to offer classes and services in an on-site community room and at an elementary school within walking distance. The University of Minnesota Extension Service teaches a popular six-week financial planning course that covers budgeting, money management and taxes. The Hopkins Minnetonka Family Resource Center provides free tax preparation services. The Minnetonka School District offers early childhood family education for parents to learn about positive discipline, nutrition, personal hygiene and safety. The school district also provides English classes for immigrant parents to improve language skills and prepare for GEDs. Children's Dental Services brings mobile dental care to Minnetonka Heights families, providing free check-ups and cavity fillings. Through frequent meetings with residents and partnering agencies, MHCEP designs services around community needs.

"We have a wealth of community resources available to support families, but many of our newer immigrants face economic, language and other barriers," says Amanda Larson, Community Program Director. "By bringing partners and resources into the neighborhood, we are more effective in helping parents and children build better futures."

MHCEP also hosts several community social events throughout the year, including an annual Thanksgiving meal that draws more than 200 people. At these events, neighbors of diverse backgrounds come together to share food and fun and build social support among each other.

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YMCA OF THE GREATER HOUSTON AREA

Award-winning program: YMCA International Services
Jeff Watkins, Executive Director
Patricia Schnabel, Youth and Teen Program Director

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Houston, TX 77057
713-339-9015
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YMCA OF THE GREATER HOUSTON AREA

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2007 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

SUCCESS FOR REFUGEES & IMMIGRANTS IN THE LONG RUN

In 1978, the YMCA of the Greater Houston Area began a unique endeavor to help Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees find housing and employment in Texas. Because of its reputation for quality family services and residential facilities, the YMCA emerged as a fitting community leader to support 1,000 refugees annually as they integrated into the Houston community. Today, YMCA International Services continues working with more than 300 refugees a year, primarily from Africa, Asia and Central America, while also serving 800 families who have recently immigrated. YMCA International Services has expanded programs to comprehensively help families achieve economic self-sufficiency and increase community involvement through education, employment and legal assistance, as well as youth programs.

"Housing and employment are crucial to helping families build economic stability, but we only have the resources to provide temporary housing and financial assistance," says Jeff Watkins, Executive Director of YMCA International Services. "Self-sufficiency is the key for families to succeed in the long run."

SOCIAL SECURITY CARDS & SOCCER: STEPS TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Refugees often arrive in Houston with only the clothes they are wearing and not a penny in their pockets. YMCA International Services works with refugees from the moment they arrive at the airport. Case managers assess family needs and develop resettlement plans detailing families' challenges and plans to access resources. YMCA helps refugees with nearly everything, from applying for Social Security cards to learning the bus system, while immediately focusing on employment and permanent housing.

YMCA International Services partners with apartment owners to waive mandatory deposits and rent histories for refugees. Though many speak limited English and lack transferable job skills, refugees are matched with jobs through relationships with hotel, restaurant and manufacturing employers. English classes and partnerships with local colleges help parents and youth to further their education as well. "All of our refugee resettlement staff members are former refugees themselves, so they are helpful and informative while being culturally sensitive and genuinely supportive," Watkins says.

In addition to meeting refugees' immediate needs, YMCA International Services offers free or subsidized legal assistance for immigrants petitioning for family members to join them and for victims of domestic violence petitioning for legal status. The agency also runs a soccer league for 1,300 children in a primarily Latino immigrant community. "Parents are vital partners in working with children, and we have 100 parent volunteers for the soccer league alone," says Patricia Schnabel, youth and teen program director. "By addressing the whole family's needs, we are able to make a difference in kids' lives."

REFUGEES FACE TREMENDOUS BARRIERS—NOT KNOWING THE LANGUAGE OR CULTURE AND POSSESSING LIMITED TRANSFERABLE JOB SKILLS AND EDUCATION. TO HELP FAMILIES SUCCEED IN THE LONG RUN, WE FOCUS ON BOOSTING PARENTS TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

—Jeff Watkins, Executive Director of YMCA International Services

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

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