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Media Contact: Lisa Desatnik, 513-984-5474



## **YMCA Black Achievers Program Expands Focus And Name**

June 24, 2009 – In just over 30 years, the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati's Black Achievers Program has grown into one of the area's largest programs of its kind, partnering with area organizations and adult role models to inspire and encourage teens of color toward paths of success. Now the Program that has impacted more than 5000 teens is joining other YMCA's across the country in modifying its name to YMCA Black & Hispanic Achievers Program. This new name reflects an expanded vision that is broadening its reach to empower even more young people of color.

This coming school year, the YMCA Black & Hispanic Achievers Program will begin two new pilot programs with Cincinnati Public Schools, where 40% of its English as a Second Language students are Hispanic. The pilots will be at Withrow International and the Academy of Multilingual Immersion Studies. Multilingual volunteers are currently being recruited to provide mentoring, college readiness and career development to Hispanic students from bilingual backgrounds. Future plans are to expand the YMCA Black & Hispanic Achievers Program into more neighborhoods, including those in Northern Kentucky.

"The YMCA is committed to meeting the needs of the community and ensuring all young people have access to opportunities. We know we're being effective by the positive changes we have seen in our teen participants," said Toni Miles, executive director of the YMCA Black & Hispanic Achievers Program. "While we have always served Hispanic teens in our program, we also know the time is now to find new ways of energizing more students."

Why the need? According to the latest data from the U.S. Census, between 2000 and 2006, the Hispanic growth rate was more than three times the growth rate of the total population. In Hamilton County alone, there has been a 52% increase since the 2000 U.S. Census. In 2007, more than 36,000 Hispanics were living in the Cincinnati-Middletown MSA.

Many Hispanic homes with children attending Cincinnati Public Schools are living below poverty level, and many families include parents who do not speak English and have never attended college. For those students who graduate high school, resources to consider secondary education are difficult to come by.

"Our Hispanic students struggle because their parents can't support them with their education. This program is what we have needed for a long time," said Sister Margarita Brewer, S.C., educational services coordinator for the office of second language acquisition with Cincinnati Public Schools.

Since its beginning, the YMCA Black & Hispanic Teen Achievers Program has awarded more than \$175,000 in scholarships, assisted youth with over \$3 million dollars in awarded scholarships, and engaged more than 4,000 adult volunteers through a network of corporate and community partners. The Program includes college prep and leadership development

activities focusing on study skills/time management, interviewing techniques, financial management, team-building field trips, community service-learning projects, college tours and more. It strongly incorporates the Abundant Assets – 40 critical factors for the successful growth and development of young people – and centers around the relationships of adult professional mentors and teens. The 2009 to 2010 goal is to serve over 500 students in the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky communities.

### **The community can help.**

The YMCA is in need of bilingual adults who are committed to the success of young people to volunteer for the program.

The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati is also asking for help from local businesses and organizations to pay tribute to accomplished, caring and civic minded professionals of color. Honorees will be recognized at the 2009 Salute to YMCA Black & Hispanic Achievers Gala on November 20, 2009.

Hispanic and African American professionals who become YMCA Achievers demonstrate their commitment to giving back by volunteering through the YMCA Black & Hispanic Teen Achievers Program.

For more information, please contact Toni Miles, at 513-362-2008 or email [tmiles@cincinnatiymca.org](mailto:tmiles@cincinnatiymca.org). Information about the program can be found at [www.myy.org](http://www.myy.org).

**About the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati:** As the area's largest youth and family-focused not-for-profit, the YMCA reinforces character values through assets-based programs and services to more than 143,000 individuals, kids and families annually. Adult mentors encourage young people to be caring, responsible, respectful, and honest through sports, summer camps, structured child and afterschool care, and leadership building programs. Branches offer quality time for families, resources for parents, and a variety of opportunities for seniors to be active. The Membership for All sliding scale fee structure means everyone, no matter their ability to pay, can always benefit from the YMCA. Last year alone more than 17,400 families and individuals enjoyed healthier and happier lives because generous partners helped the YMCA in its vision to be accessible to all.

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