

NEWS RELEASE

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DC MAYOR & LEADERS CELEBRATE AN ICONIC YMCA'S RE-OPENING IN DC'S U STREET

[WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 9, 2013] – On the heels of the 50th anniversary of the [March on Washington](#), the YMCA is resurrecting the legacy of a pioneer long before Dr. King. In 1853, a time plagued by slavery and callous divides, Anthony Bowen organized the first YMCA in the nation to serve African Americans. Today, YMCA Anthony Bowen rises again in the U Street/ Shaw community, reviving a legacy that has been integral to civil rights. With the help of DC Mayor Vincent Gray, DC Council Members Jack Evans and Jim Graham, YMCA Board Chair Roderic Woodson, and over 150 community leaders, the Y unveiled an inspiring vision, progressive programs and stories of hope that will once again make history.

"The YMCA is a must. We need a bigger, better YMCA to facilitate the growth of our community," shares Virginia Ali, Co-Founder of [Ben's Chili Bowl](#).

As Janice Williams, the Y's SVP of Program Development divulges: "People still need places to meet, educate children and learn ways to improve their well-being. That's what this 'YMCA of the new age' can accomplish, while serving as a model for how urban YMCAs can operate in the future."

The new Y unites the right minds and resources to serve DC's diverse and evolving needs. The premier center features a 2-story rock wall, teaching kitchen, support services, a 6-lane pool, 173 group exercise classes per week, a rooftop terrace, community events and a preschool academy. It's a welcoming and uplifting community space that maximizes connection and growth. Several celebrated artists created unique works of art that honor the Y and U Street's colorful history: artist [Maggie O'Neill](#), designer [Diane Taitt](#), muralist [Hense](#), photographer [Eunique Jones](#) and muralist/ restaurateur [Andy Shallal](#).

"The Y can be a galvanizing force that brings people of different backgrounds together. It is important to put something up there that reminds people this isn't just an exercise place. It's a community center," expresses Andy Shallal, owner of Busboys & Poets and YMCA Anthony Bowen Board Member.

No stone was left unturned at this iconic YMCA. Every detail was meticulously designed to bring people together and nurture potential – including partnerships. [L'Academie de Cuisine](#), Bethesda's premier culinary arts school, is leading cooking classes in the Y's kitchen (on top of the celebrity chef series); [Vertical Rock Climbing](#) is training Y staff and offering certification classes and traversing to members; [Angela Meyer](#), the Y's new Regional Group Exercise Director is transforming movement arts at YMCA Anthony Bowen and YMCA National Capital; and [sweetgreen](#) is sharing space and resources. This Y will also serve as the headquarters for [YMCA DC Youth & Government](#), [the Y's childhood obesity prevention program](#), and [Darkness to Light child sexual abuse prevention training](#).

Born a slave, Anthony Bowen fought for hope and inclusion. His namesake Y operated out of rented and donated space for its first 40 years of existence, its first true home being the 12th Street Y. YMCA Anthony Bowen provided refuge for many great minds seeking growth

- Poet Langston Hughes lived there; Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall designed legal strategies there; Dr. Charles Drew was part of the boy's department. The Y stood as an oasis and beacon of hope even during the violent and destructive riots following Dr. King's assassination and the collapse of the Shaw neighborhood. Each time this Y has been resurrected, it has met the personal and social needs of the community and nation.

"I joined because of Bowen's story," explains Chris, a YMCA Anthony Bowen Charter Member. "It's such a rich history in this area and to be a member here means that I can exercise, learn and be motivated at the same time."

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ABOUT THE YMCA OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. We've been connecting and supporting men, women and children in Greater Washington for 160 years – regardless of age, income or background. Anchored in Washington, DC, southern MD, and northern VA, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington creates a positive difference in the lives of more than 300,000 people each year through its 17 branches and program centers. We have the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. For more information, visit www.ymcadc.org or follow us at www.facebook.com/YMetroDC.