

For Immediate Release

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## **SPARKING THE CREATIVITY & CURIOSITY OF NEARLY 4,000 DC-AREA YOUTH IN ONE DAY**

*YMCA Thingamajig Invention Convention educates and inspires kids through STEM, invention challenges, recycling, active play and more*

**Washington, D.C., July 26, 2012** – Years of research has proven just how harmful lazy, playful summers can be on the physical and mental growth of kids. In the DC region, there's a solution to learning loss and childhood obesity, and it can all be taught in one day. Today, 3,970 DC-area youth ages 5-14 cultivated creative expression, healthy habits and curiosity at the Y's Thingamajig Invention Convention. Through fun, hands-on activities led by 400 volunteers and 25 organizations, kids discovered how they can positively contribute to the world, their health and their future.

"I get so excited about Thingamajig because it's the best thing in my life next to Christmas," shares a 9-year old camper from YMCA Alexandria. "It's so much fun and you get really cool prizes for the things you do."

At the Y's Thingamajig Invention Convention, DC-area youth have the opportunity to dig deeper into subjects that interest them. The most inspiring aspect is the recyclable inventions kids spend over a month creating. Robots, spaghetti structures, newspaper dresses, new fitness equipment, and flying machines filled the arena. Not only did kids experiment with their ideas, they also explored STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), flying a plane, gardening, active fitness and play, shopping healthy, making useful things out of Play-Doh and LEGOs, creating art and much more. They even had a rare opportunity to meet members of the Tuskegee Airmen, pioneers in aviation and civil rights.

"The essence of Thingamajig is that kids are recognized for being important and for working hard at something," describes Janice Williams, creator of Thingamajig and Senior VP of the YMCA of Metro. Washington. "Whether it's completing an activity or simply having an adult validate their ideas, it reinforces that they can do anything they set their mind to."

In its 18<sup>th</sup> year, the Y's Thingamajig Invention Convention continues to get more popular among Y campers and community members, starting out with 143 campers in 1994 to 3,970 kids this year... 850 of which had no prior connection to the Y. Through interactive workshops and challenges, this event taps into kids' creativity and curiosity, allowing them to develop a personal understanding of how the world works. Last year, approximately 525 imaginative recyclable inventions were submitted, and there were 51 interactive workshops led by the Y and other leading organizations. In addition, 440 volunteers were there to inspire each and every child to follow their dreams and ideas. Thingamajig is free and open to the public.

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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. 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 200,000 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](http://www.ymcadc.org) or follow us at [www.facebook.com/ymcadc](https://www.facebook.com/ymcadc).