

For Immediate Release

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The Battle Against Diabetes: Lifestyle Change Program Offers New Classes and Full Scholarships

Washington, D.C., February 2, 2012 – Nearly 26 million Americans have diabetes and a staggering 79 million people have prediabetes, a condition in which individuals have blood glucose levels that are higher than normal, but not high enough to be classified as diabetes. People with prediabetes are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. In honor of American Heart Month, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington is offering several new classes of its innovative diabetes prevention program throughout the Metro DC area. To help bring the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program to those who need it the most, a grant received from Merck & Co., Inc. is allowing the Y to offer thirty full scholarships throughout 2012 to those who qualify.

“This powerful private-public sector partnership is truly a model of how we can achieve anything if we work together,” shares YMCA Board Member and Registered Nurse, Lesley Zork. “We know that intervention has already made a tremendous difference in the lives of our first program participants. The scholarship allows the program to expand its education and support to more at-risk individuals in our community.”

The YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program is a group-based lifestyle change program designed for individuals who are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Individuals who participate in the program take part in 16 one-hour classroom sessions with a trained Lifestyle Coach who helps them learn about healthy eating, physical activity and other healthy habits. Following these sessions, participants meet monthly for up to a year for added support in reaching their ultimate goals of reducing body weight by 7 percent and participating in 150 minutes of physical activity per week. Through lifestyle changes and modest weight reduction, the program has shown to reduce risk of type 2 diabetes by 58 percent.

According to a report released by the D.C. Department of Health in 2010, approximately 22 percent of adults in D.C. are obese. In addition, 15 percent of all deaths in 2007 were attributed to the second most preventable cause of death--lack of physical activity and poor diet. The report also found that residents with diabetes and high blood pressure have high rates of obesity. As an organization that is committed to healthy living, the Y is combining its resources with other local organizations to control and reduce these alarming statistics.

As Lesley describes, "scientific studies have proven conclusively that diabetes can be prevented for the vast majority of people who are at risk for the disease through basic awareness and common sense changes in lifestyle. The YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program couldn't be timelier and stands as an affirmation of the YMCA's commitment to strengthening community.”

The YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program is supported nationally by UnitedHealth Group and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is available at 46 Ys in 23 states. Scholarships are available through a generous donation from Merck & Co., Inc. and other YMCA supporters. To learn more about the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program and to find out if you qualify, please contact Irmina Ulysse at 202-862-3171, ext. 3171 or irmina.ulysses@ymcadc.org.

About the Y

The YMCA of Metropolitan Washington (the Y) has been providing vital programs and services for local adults, children and families for nearly 160 years. The organization's mission is to foster the spiritual, mental, and physical development of individuals, families, and communities according to the ideals of inclusiveness, equality and mutual respect for all. Last year alone, the Y impacted the lives of 265,000 people through its 17 branches and program centers in Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland. For more information, visit www.ymcadc.org.

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