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Afterschool Meal Programs Address the Social Needs of Youth

Register for afterschool programs at the YMCA CAPE COD

West Barnstable, March 9, 2012 - The Afterschool Meals Program (AMP) pilot project will run at the YMCA Cape Cod from February through June of 2012. Funded through a \$10,000 grant from Y-USA and the Wal-Mart Foundation, this innovative program incorporates the Y's Healthy Eating and Physical Activities (HEPA) Standards for Early Childhood and Afterschool Programs. All children enrolled in the Y's West Barnstable Afterschool Program and the Y's High Flight Program located at Camp Lyndon in Sandwich will experience this program. The AMP pilot offers children in the afterschool programs the opportunity to get into the kitchen, learn practical culinary skills while exploring the science of different methods of cooking. Child-size chef coats and hats were purchased for children to wear; little sous chefs while learning in the kitchen.

"At the YMCA Cape Cod we are committed to nurturing the potential of every child and teen," said Stacie Peugh, President and CEO, YMCA Cape Cod. "We believe all kids deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve. In our afterschool programs, youth are cultivating values, skills and relationships, and have an extra support system that encourages them to achieve success."

Combining play with academics, YMCA afterschool programs promote creativity, a love for learning, social and emotional development and character building in a safe and nurturing environment with caring adults. The AMP pilot enhances and enriches our existing programming. Each month children will sit at the table together for a family style dinner. Learning all aspects of the dinner from planning a healthy menu to table manners, children fully engage and take an ownership role in putting together a healthy meal.

A community garden, started with seed money from the AMP pilot, is in the early planning stages for the West Barnstable facility. This garden will provide opportunities for youth in the afterschool program to work together as a community with volunteers from our Y family, learning horticultural skills as well as healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime.

Studies show that participation in afterschool programs helps boost school attendance and academic performance, and helps to alleviate achievement gaps among children from disadvantaged households. Youth who attend afterschool are known to perform better academically and develop skills such as self-regulation, communication, problem solving, team

building, negotiation and critical thinking. AMP builds on this effective model, making healthy eating and physical activity life skills that all children develop. It's also a healthy way for children and teens to stay active and productive when the school day ends.

For more information about the YMCA Cape Cod's afterschool program, please contact Jennifer Watkins, Afterschool Program Coordinator, at 508 362 6500 ext 115.

About the Y

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the U.S., 2,700 Ys engage 21 million men, women and children – regardless of age, income or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in more than 10,000 communities, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. Ymcacapecod.org