



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Monday, May 3, 2010**

**GOOD NEWS!
FROM THE VALLEY OF THE SUN YMCA**

YMCA's "Y Achievers" Help Students Strive for Higher Education
Youth support club opens doors of possibilities for future

PHOENIX, AZ: ---The Valley of the Sun YMCA, through their Community Initiatives YMCA, coordinates the "Y Achievers" support club for middle and high school students. Since 2002, over 1656 area students have participated in this unique Y program that promotes good work ethics and encourages not only the completion of secondary education, but the goal of attending some venue of higher education—college or vocational school. About 25% of these students continue through the program from year to year until graduation—and this year 26 seniors are planning to attend college in fall 2010.

The "Y Achievers" program allows youth to participate in career clusters (where they learn about careers from special guest speakers), mentoring relationships, tutoring sessions, college tours, cultural events, community projects (such as Global Youth Service Day Food Drive or Cancer Walk for Life), and youth leadership activities—111 participants routinely attend weekly sessions. All facets of this program encourage scholastic achievement, as well as the importance of community service and leadership.

A three-year participant and President of "Y Achievers", Karim LaRonde had this to say about his experience, "I was given tools by a group of the best mentors that will only lead me to greater accomplishments as I go further down the road of life—and that would not have ever been possible without the Achievers Program...as an Achiever, I found that I was looking out for the interest of others more often than I was looking to help myself. I knew that I was receiving a different type of education that many would not get the chance to capture." Karim is an example of what many of the participants are able to accomplish—he is now a freshman in college.

The Valley of the Sun YMCA is pleased to be a part of the journey of these "achievers" as they become our future business and community leaders.

The Community Initiatives YMCA is a strategic priority for youth development from the Valley of the Sun YMCA. This "branch without walls" operates youth development programming in YMCA service areas throughout Maricopa County and the State of Arizona. The youth development programs offered concentrate in four primary domains of service: High School Dropout Intervention, Work or College Readiness, Youth Leadership, and Youth delinquency prevention and intervention.

About the YMCA:

Over 2600 YMCAs serve 21 million people each year, including nearly 10 million children under the age of 18. YMCAs respond to critical social needs by drawing on their collective strength as one of America's largest not-for-profit community service organizations. Through a variety of programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, family strengthening, and health and well being for all, YMCAs unite men, women and children of all ages, faiths, backgrounds, abilities and income levels. From urban areas to small towns, YMCAs have proudly served America's communities for nearly 160 years by building healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Visit valleyymca.org to find your local YMCA

**For more information about the Y Achievers —
or to arrange for an interview with a
Valley of the Sun YMCA Community Initiatives Representative or a participant of the Y Achievers,
please contact: Manda Hurdelbrink • 513.324.8610 cell**