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Y Community Snapshot: Americans Feel the Strongest Obligation to Effect Change in their Communities

Princeton, January 2011 Research from the Y finds that most Americans are cautiously optimistic that the conditions of their community will improve, but feel the strongest obligation to roll up their sleeves and help make a difference.

According to the "Y Community Snapshot", a national survey conducted by the Y to better understand how Americans feel about their communities today, the majority (66 percent) say the current quality of their community is worse than it was a year ago. However, people across the country ranked themselves, along with family and other community members, as having the biggest obligation (34 percent) and greatest opportunity (30 percent) to effect change in their community – even more so than federal, state or local governments.

The Y is a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. We are committed to giving people the opportunity to give back and support their neighbors, whether it is through nurturing the potential of kids, improving the nation's health or getting involved in innovative programs to create lasting social change efforts. And, people are answering the call.

For example, a Y in Clearfield, PA, hosts an afterschool program for youth to restore old bikes and donate them to families in need. Clearfield is a small community hit hard by the recession, and many residents cannot afford cars or local transportation. This past summer, the kids began restoring old bicycles that had been donated by YMCA members and local stores. They are continuing the project leading up to holiday season, with their biggest challenge to date: rebuilding 25 bikes to donate to the Toys for Tots Program, which gives holiday season gifts to families in need.

Additionally, The YMCA of Greater Houston hosts a Caring Community Centers program - an apartment outreach program that brings essential social services to low-income and newcomer communities. The Y partners with local apartment owners to transform apartments into "communities of caring", where people can "belong" to the Y within their own homes, allowing children and families to take advantage of Y programs and services, such as ESL classes and youth sports and swimming lessons. Today, 20 Ys across Houston participate in the program and there are 30 Caring Community Centers that improve quality of life for the community. More than 20,000 people benefit from the program each year.

Right here in Princeton, the YMCA partners with Princeton Nursery School annually to make sure each child receives a special gift for the holiday's with its member Giving Tree. Each spring the children also come to the Y for a week of swim safety and lessons.

The "Snapshot" also reveals that a full 72 percent contributed goods or services in the last year and nearly two-thirds (64 percent) have donated money to a worthy organization.

You, too, can join the Y in helping to move communities forward. Get involved at one of the 2,687 Ys across the country. Contact the Princeton Family YMCA at 609-497-9622 to inquire about ways you can give back today.

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The Princeton Family YMCA is a charitable, cause-driven organization dedicated to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. For more information about YMCA programs visit princetonymca.org or call 609-497-9622