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**YMCA TAKES UNIQUE FUNDRAISING APPROACH TO ENSURE MAXIMUM IMPACT
IN A TOUGH YEAR**

“Phantom Gala” campaign is underway!

MIAMI (July 8, 2009)- This year, the need for scholarship dollars for YMCA programs is as high as ever. With recent state funding cuts, which move the eligibility for school-age care funding back to 8 year olds, 390 children ages 9-11 are at risk of being cut from the program. These children could likely end up home alone or in other unsafe places after school and throughout the summer. So, the YMCA is pulling out all the stops and taking a bold and unique approach to fundraising to make sure none of these children are left behind.

In the past, the YMCA has raised most of its Strong Kids Campaign scholarship dollars through a fundraising Gala. While it's been a great tradition and the event raises over \$500,000, in today's economic climate it's critical to eliminate the expense of a large event. Instead, the YMCA will focus on a face-to-face campaign where donors are connected with the children they are supporting.

Gilberto Neves, CEO of Odebrecht and Chairman of the YMCA of Greater Miami Board shared, “The YMCA Gala has become a popular event the community looks forward to attending, but this year, instead of producing a grand ball, we are having a *Phantom Gala*. The idea is that people won't actually attend a party, and every dollar will be able to go directly to the kids. Donors are sponsoring scholarship programs supporting children's participation in the YMCA. As a thank you, the YMCA will hold celebrations at several schools connecting our donors with the very kids and families their dollars are assisting.”

“We know this is the right thing to do and is the most efficient way for the YMCA to get the needed scholarship dollars to those families who are at risk,” shared Brian Mormile, market executive of U.S. Trust Bank of America Private Wealth Management and Co-Chair of the Phantom Gala Campaign. “This year, I think we're all getting back to the basics. It's not a time that people want to dress up and go to fancy fundraising events, when they have employees

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and friends who have recently lost jobs and are struggling. As the economy recovers, we'll bring back the gala; for now, it's all about the children!"

Alfred Sanchez, CEO of the YMCA of Greater Miami expressed, "We are committed to these kids. They are not just a name on a list to be cut to balance a budget. To us they have faces, they are family; we know them and their stories. We've been overwhelmed by the generosity our supporters are showing so far. We set a bold fundraising goal of \$1 million for this year and, to date, we have already reached over 70% of the goal. Now the Phantom Gala campaign is being launched to raise the remaining \$250,000 needed."

For gifts totaling \$25,000 (either from a single donor or a group of donors) the YMCA is inviting donors to "adopt" a YMCA after-school site and be recognized throughout the year at that school. All donors giving \$1,000 or more will also be recognized at a special "Phantom" Gala donor recognition reception in October at the Adrienne Arsht Center.

For more information on how to volunteer to be a part of the Phantom Gala, or to make a donation, please call 305-357-4000 Ext 128 or visit www.ymcastrongkids.org/FL .

About YMCA of Greater Miami

Founded in 1916, the YMCA of Greater of Miami is one of South Florida's oldest and largest not-for-profit organizations. With branches throughout Miami-Dade and upper Monroe County, the Y is committed to building strong kids, strong families and strong communities. Its scope of services includes youth sports, aquatics, after-school, preschool and child care, summer camp, teen clubs, health and fitness programs, and membership. For more information about the YMCA of Greater Miami, call toll free 1-877-WOW-YMCA or visit www.ymcamiami.org.

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