



YMCA of Greater Hartford and Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford announce drowning prevention collaboration

Two Hartford not-for-profits have announced a new partnership aimed at preventing drowning deaths among young people of color. The YMCA of Greater Hartford and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford are together boosting participation in the Y's Third Grade Swim program, which makes **swim lessons free to all Hartford children ages 5-9** with a goal of making sure that no child lacks basic swimming ability by third grade.

This session, over 100 Boys & Girls Clubs members are developing water safety and swim skills through YMCA Third Grade Swim at the Learning Corridor. By the end of August, the YMCA's goal is to serve 625 young people in Hartford and East Hartford.

Deirdre Brickhouse, Director of Aquatic Initiatives at the Downtown YMCA initiated the partnership between the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club this spring. "Just as every child should be able to read by third grade, every child should also be able to swim and know water safety rules by third grade," says Brickhouse. "The YMCA is working to close the swimming learning gap that exists among young people of color and keep our community safe. With the Boys & Girls Club as our partner, we can expand our reach and make sure more Hartford youth are safe in the water."



PHOTO CAPTION: Harold Sparrow, president and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Hartford (right) and Samuel J. Gray, Jr., president and CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford (left), visited poolside with participants in Third Grade Swim at the Learning Corridor in Hartford. By summer's end, some 625 young people from Hartford and East Hartford are expected to have learned to swim.

###

The Centers for Disease Control reports that between 1999 and 2010, the fatal unintentional drowning rate for African Americans was significantly higher than that of whites across all ages with the widest disparity among children 5-18 years old. **African American children 5-19 drown in swimming pools at rates 5.5 times higher than those of whites. Eleven and twelve-year-old African American children drown in swimming pools at rates 10 times those of whites.** (<http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/water-safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html>)

About The YMCA of Greater Hartford The YMCA of Greater Hartford is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) charitable organization established in 1852 and is one of the nation's oldest YMCA's. The YMCA of Greater Hartford builds strong communities by helping individuals reach their fullest potential through transformative programs that promote Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility. We help people reach their fullest potential by putting a caring adult in the presence of every child; being good stewards of the resources entrusted to us; and working in partnership to eliminate the disparities in health and education. In 2015, the YMCA of Greater Hartford served more than 118,000 people, including 66,000 children, in 52 towns and cities throughout the Hartford, Litchfield, Tolland and Windham counties. YMCA programs put the values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility into practice to build healthy spirit, mind and body for all participants. [Ghymca.org](http://ghymca.org)

About the Boys and Girls Club of Hartford

Located at eight sites throughout the Capitol Region, Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford enable all young people, especially those most in need, to reach their full potential as productive, caring and responsible citizens. In more than 156 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford have provided program opportunities for over 7,000 boys and girls every year in areas such as character and leadership development, education and career growth, arts and cultural enrichment as well as fitness and recreation. To become a member, volunteer, donate, or learn more about Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, call 860-929-7667 or visit www.bgchartford.org.