



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

For Immediate Release

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Wilson-Gray YMCA Reach & Rise® Mentoring Program seeks caring adult volunteers to engage at risk youth

In an effort to help more kids and teens achieve, the YMCA of Greater Hartford, through its Wilson-Gray YMCA Youth and Family Center branch, is expanding its Reach & Rise Mentoring Program. Supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), this national program connects youth ages 6 to 17 with adult volunteer mentors who provide direct one-to-one mentoring services and create safe, healthy and meaningful relationships with youth for 12 to 18 months.

Together, mentors and mentees participate in service projects, field trips and other engaging activities throughout the community and at the Y. Mentors meet with their mentees for 1-3 hours a week, introducing youth to different experiences and opportunities that they otherwise do not have access to due to lack of resources.

"We thank our Reach & Rise mentors who through just a few hours a week of volunteering make an immeasurable impact on the lives of Hartford students. But we still need volunteers. There are more kids waiting to find the right mentor," says Krystal Bravo, director of the Reach & Rise program.

Said one mother of her child's Reach & Rise experiences, "My son's mentor gives him guidance and does not judge him. When I have a problem with my son, I know that I can call his mentor, he is easy to communicate with. When my son meets with him, I can see that he helps uplift his spirits. My son adores his mentor and he inspires him to reach higher. My son really respects him and he came into our lives at the right time!"

The goal of the program is to provide Hartford youth with an opportunity to build positive, consistent, and nurturing relationships with adult mentors that will help build self-esteem, improve decision making skills, and school performance, as well as create healthy interpersonal relationships.

"The Reach & Rise Mentoring Program benefits dozens of Hartford young people, inspiring them to reach their full potential," said Harold Sparrow, president & CEO, YMCA of Greater Hartford. "Through this program, more youth in Hartford will develop relationships with caring mentors, families and schools leading to higher achievement and a brighter future."

Nearly one in five youth live in poverty and are at risk of falling prey to crime, drugs and other hurdles that could keep them from reaching productive adulthood, obtaining an education and successfully entering the workforce. Research also shows that youth are more likely to succeed with the support of a caring adult.

To learn more about the program and how to become a mentor, contact Krystal Bravo, Program Director at (860) 522-9622 ext. 2310 or krystal.bravo@ghymca.org or visit: <http://www.ghymca.org/volunteerism.cfm>

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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 56 towns and cities throughout the Capital Region. 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