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**YMCA of METROPOLITAN MILWAUKEE ANTICIPATES
MORE THAN 20,000 CAMPERS FOR 2002**

Organized summer camping dates to "Y" excursion in 1867

MILWAUKEE, May 1, 2002 – What began as a YMCA summer outing more than 100 years ago has evolved into a way of life for the more than 20,000 kids who will attend the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee's resident and day camps this summer. This growing number is attributed to the increased interest in environmental education and expedition-based camping, major enhancements to the YMCA's highly-regarded resident camps, and a number of trial specialty camps being offered such as a new skateboard, golf, and dance camp.

According to Jack Lund, president, YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee, over the last five years, the YMCA has completed major additions and improvements to Y resident and day camps, nearly tripling the number of kids participating. "We have doubled resident YMCA camp capacity with new state-of-the-art cabins that are completely accessible to anyone," adds Lund. "And, more than 60 percent of 2002 campers are receiving this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity thanks to the YMCA's Strong Kids campaign which provides scholarships for kids that need it most."

The YMCAs' involvement with camping goes back to 1867, when a YMCA youth director in Vermont took a group of boys to Lake Champlain. By 1882, dozens of YMCAs were sponsoring youth and adult camping programs and the activities had earned a place in Ys' national record-keeping as "outings and excursions."

Those early YMCA camping excursions quickly led to the establishment of summer (or resident) camps. In 1885, the YMCA started America's first ongoing summer camp program when YMCA volunteer Sumner Dudley, long active with both the New York and New Jersey YMCAs, took seven boys on a week-long camping trip to Orange Lake, N.Y. By 1905, the number of Y campers grew to 6,348 in 187 YMCA resident camps. In 1908, Dudley's work was recognized with a permanent resident camp on the shores of Lake Champlain, NY called Camp Dudley.

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YMCA anticipates increase in 2002 campers

“Where else can kids experience the true power of camp, the purity of the North woods, and the friendships that form under the open skies,” says Cliff Clauer, branch executive of the YMCA Camp Minikani. “We at the YMCA, are the heirs to wonderful outdoor traditions. At Camp Minikani, for example, we awaken and go to sleep by bugle. Through involvement in Y camp programs, parents can feel sure that their children will be involved in character-building, values-based 21st century activities that will develop their spirits, minds and bodies.”

Dudley, the nation’s oldest summer camp, is still in operation. And in 1910, YMCA leaders helped create the American Camping Association with YMCA Camp Director Charles Scott as its first president. Today, the ACA accredits both private and public camps, including many YMCAs.

Nationally, more than 1,600 YMCA Day Camps served more than 500,000 children, providing safe, fun summer experiences under the guidance of caring adults. In addition to Camp Minikani, the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee offers resident camping opportunities at Camp Matawa in Campbellsport, and Triangle Y Ranch, an equestrian-based camp in West Bend. Day Camping opportunities are available at x YMCA branches throughout Milwaukee.

And, the YMCA is introducing several specialty camping options this year such as golf camp and skateboard camp at the Triangle Y Ranch, dance camp via the day camps, and Camp Minikani’s Expeditions camps – wilderness tripping programs for teens.

All Y camps continue to instill values and develop young leaders based on the principles of the YMCAs’ founders, through positive role models, environmental stewardship, character building, community building and self-esteem. Entering their 150th year in America in 2001, YMCA camps do so with the following legacy: 242 resident YMCA camps serving 250,000 campers annually; 1,693 YMCA day camps with a half-million day campers involved annually.

For more information on youth and adult camping programs at the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee, call 224-9622 or inquire online at www.ymcamke.org.

The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee builds strong kids, strong families and communities at 16 branches throughout metropolitan Milwaukee. In 1996, the YMCA launched the City Agenda, an aggressive effort to make life better for people in the central city through programs and services. The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee believes in providing membership and program services to all who desire to participate. The YMCA’s Scholarship Program, supported in part through contributions to the Strong Kids Campaign, provides membership and program scholarships for those in need within our available resources. The YMCA’s mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

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