



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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GOOD NEWS!
FROM THE VALLEY OF THE SUN YMCA

**YMCA Provides Opportunities for Students
to Participate in Cultural Exchange**

Area youth travel to Mexico City and then host Mexican students visit in July

PHOENIX, AZ: ---The Valley of the Sun YMCA, through their Community Initiatives YMCA, believes that providing area youth with opportunities for civic engagement to be essential in developing the building blocks for a healthy community in the future. The "International Initiatives" program is part of the YMCA mission to teach respect and understanding of cultural differences and global issues.

In its second year, the **Teen Outbound Trip** offers 15-18 year old high school students the chance to travel to Mexico City. During the trip, teens will stay with a local YMCA family, visit the YMCA Camp in Mexico City, tour cultural attractions, and participate in a number of community outreach programs such as helping out at the orphanage, Casa Hogar, which is run by the local YMCA. "The YMCA is dedicated to the goal of providing Greater Phoenix area teens, that might not otherwise have the opportunity to travel, this extraordinary experience to broaden their cultural awareness, says Beth Haugen, Community Initiatives Senior Program Director.

In July, the YMCA will host the **Youth Ambassador Program**. High School students from Mexico will be staying in Metro Phoenix with local American host families for a 12-day visit. The host student will "buddy" with the Mexican student and help them experience what life is like in America. This exchange program will include: touring cultural significant attractions in the Valley including a stop at the Arizona Capitol Museum, visiting YMCA camp, and participation in workshops and roundtable discussions focused on Violence Prevention and Reduction, as well as seminars on Grassroots Democracy and Leadership Development.

The Valley of the Sun YMCA is pleased to be a part of educating our youth on cultural and global issues and continues to provide programs and services that will help develop the community leaders of tomorrow.

The Community Initiatives YMCA is a strategic priority for youth development from the Valley of the Sun YMCA. This "branch without walls" operates youth development programming in YMCA service areas throughout Maricopa County and the State of Arizona. The youth development programs offered concentrate in four primary domains of service: High School Dropout Intervention, Work or College Readiness, Youth Leadership, and Youth delinquency prevention and intervention.

About the YMCA:

Over 2600 YMCAs serve 21 million people each year, including nearly 10 million children under the age of 18. YMCAs respond to critical social needs by drawing on their collective strength as one of America's largest not-for-profit community service organizations. Through a variety of programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, family strengthening, and health and well being for all, YMCAs unite men, women and children of all ages, faiths, backgrounds, abilities and income levels. From urban areas to small towns, YMCAs have proudly served America's communities for nearly 160 years by building healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Visit valleymca.org to find your local YMCA

**For more information about the Teen Outbound Trip or the Youth Ambassador Program —
or to arrange for an interview with a Valley of the Sun YMCA Community Initiatives Representative,
please contact: Manda Hurdelbrink • 513.324.8610 cell**