



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, July 1, 2010

GOOD NEWS!
FROM THE VALLEY OF THE SUN YMCA

**YMCA's "Las Artes de Maricopa" Program
Provides At-risk Youth an Opportunity to earn GED**

Innovative youth program blends art instruction with GED support

PHOENIX, AZ: ---The Valley of the Sun YMCA, through their Community Initiatives YMCA, partners with PSA Art Awakenings and the Maricopa County Human Services to provide the "Las Artes de Maricopa" program. Available to disadvantaged youth ages 16-21, this innovative program offers an opportunity to participate in a variety of public art projects while pursuing a GED, advanced training, and/or employment.

The "Las Artes de Maricopa" program reaches out to those youth who come from less fortunate backgrounds and are struggling to overcome difficult circumstances. This collaborative program provides the participants needed support and encouragement to earn their GED, as well as addressing any social and emotional issues. The students also learn life skills such as money management, writing a resume, and how to interview for a job. Leadership development and team building help the students achieve long term goals.

On July 29, 2010, the "Las Artes de Maricopa" program will graduate 62 students. "We are extremely proud of each and every one of our graduates this year," says Mike Graser, Las Artes de Maricopa Program Director. "They have worked hard to obtain their goals — and also have created extraordinary art projects that the public will be able to enjoy for years to come. "

The Valley of the Sun YMCA is proud to be a part of the successful "Las Artes de Maricopa" program that provides participants an opportunity to create a better future and helps build a stronger community.

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 valleyymca.org to find your local YMCA

**For more information about the Las Artes de Maricopa 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**