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CONTACT:

Ellen Sheppard
YWCA Greater Pittsburgh
412-255-1253
esheppard@ywcapgh.org

YWCA Greater Pittsburgh marks 150 years of equity and empowerment

Pittsburgh, PA -- March 1, 2017: From relief for Civil War Veteran's families to providing STEM Education for at-risk girls to taking a stand against racism, YWCA Greater Pittsburgh has forged trails of leadership, advocacy, and action for women, girls, and communities of color since 1867.

The YW will launch its year-long celebration of its 150th anniversary on Thursday, March 9, at LeMont Restaurant, Mt. Washington, with cocktails at 5:30 p.m. followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m.

A schedule of community activities for the anniversary year will be announced over the next several months to highlight the hundreds of thousands of people who have participated in YW programs over the years and to engage the community at large in the work of the YW.

"YWCA Greater Pittsburgh has historically recognized and met needs as they have arisen," Magdeline E. Jensen, chief executive officer, YWCA Greater Pittsburgh, said. "We began by sewing for suffering families. Today, we remain committed to knocking down barriers for women and girls, people of color, and low-income families. And we're positioned to address the needs of tomorrow."

YWCA's pioneering approach began just after the Civil War when women met to provide relief for the families of Union Soldiers at a time when organized women's clubs and social service agencies didn't exist. It has continued to respond to the needs of the times in the 150 years since, initiating a "Business Girls" department in the 1930s that provided typing and shorthand training. It was in the late 1950s and 60s that the YW's work on behalf of civil rights gained momentum. At the 1970 YWCA National Convention, the Association adopted what became known as "One Imperative – To thrust our collective power toward the elimination of racism wherever it exists by any means necessary."

Jensen credits YWCA Greater Pittsburgh's ingenuity and flexibility for enabling the organization to meet community needs as they arise. Guided by a female Board and membership, the YW has always been particularly attuned to challenges of the day and opportunities for moving the needle toward equity and empowerment for all.

Today's responses include: subsidized child care for women who are the sole financial supporters of their families and housing for women in transition; education about breast health for marginalized women; STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs for teen-aged girls from socio-economically challenged homes; a leading community partner and resource for racial justice, inclusion, and equity; and programs to erode health inequities by connecting families to affordable health care.

“We are on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. Our goal is to create a community that advances education, opportunity, and equity regardless of gender, race, or background,” Jensen says.

For additional information about YWCA Greater Pittsburgh, visit ywcapgh.org. For March 9 event tickets, starting at \$150, call 412-255-1261.

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About YWCA Greater Pittsburgh

YWCA Greater Pittsburgh is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all, envisioning a community that advances education, opportunity, and equity regardless of gender, race, or background. Today, YWCA serves more than 70,000 women, children, and families every year.

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