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YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee urges community to test risk for type 2 diabetes on American Diabetes Association Alert Day®, March 24

MILWAUKEE – Tuesday, March 24, is American Diabetes Association Alert Day, and the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee encourages community members to learn their risk for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes, as well as preventive steps they can take today to reduce the chances of developing the disease. Diabetes is a growing epidemic in Milwaukee County, with 40 percent, or 241,000 people at high risk for developing diabetes – 14 percent higher than the Wisconsin state average of 25 percent – according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

The Y knows that the best way to reduce new cases of type 2 diabetes is to prevent them, and awareness is the first step to prevention. With only 10 percent of the 86 million Americans with prediabetes aware of their condition, the Milwaukee Y understands that it will take everyone working together to increase this number. The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee is joining Ys across the country, and other national organizations committed to addressing the diabetes epidemic, in an effort to help one million more Americans learn their risk for type 2 diabetes by taking a risk test at www.ymca.net/diabetes.

The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee is also hosting a free health screening on Tuesday, March 24 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Parklawn YMCA, located at 4340 N. 46th St., in Milwaukee and encourages Milwaukee community members to attend and find out if they're at risk for developing Type 2 diabetes.

"Chances are each of us has a friend or family member with diabetes, but it's even more likely that we know someone with prediabetes who doesn't even know he or she is at risk," said Ellie Duyser, RD, CD, healthy living director at the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee. "Diabetes Alert Day is the perfect time to not only determine our own risk, but also encourage our family and friends to test their risk of developing the disease. Studies show that people with prediabetes can prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes by making simple lifestyle changes that include eating healthier and increasing physical activity."

As a leader in preventative health programs, the Milwaukee Y is focused on addressing the diabetes epidemic through collaborative approaches within the community such as the Milwaukee YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program. Part of the Milwaukee Y's Healthy Living program portfolio, the program is a comprehensive, community-oriented approach that combines diet, exercise and education elements in a supportive environment where participants work with a lifestyle coach to learn how to adopt healthy habits and exercise more. Participant retention is at 90 percent, with an average weight loss of 7 percent following the year-long program. Based on research funded by the National Institutes of Health, the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program reduces the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by as much as 58 percent when program goals are achieved.

YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program participant and Milwaukee Y member, Christine Wanasek, has lost over 40 pounds since she started the program in August of 2013. "I came to realize my diet was loaded with fat and my food portions were too large. My coach taught me about reading labels, making healthier choices and having a more balanced diet," said Wanasek.

Prediabetes is an often preventable condition in which individuals have blood glucose levels that are higher than normal, but not high enough to be classified as diabetes. People with prediabetes can reduce their risk for developing type 2 diabetes by adopting behavior changes that include eating healthier, increasing physical activity, and losing a modest amount of weight. People with prediabetes are at risk for not only developing type 2 diabetes, but also heart disease, stroke and other conditions.

Some basic lifestyle changes that contribute to weight loss and an increased focus on healthy living can decrease the risk for type 2 diabetes. Among these are:

- Eat fruits and vegetables every day.
- Choose fish, lean meats and poultry without skin.
- Aim for whole grains with every meal.
- Be moderately active at least 30 minutes per day five days a week.
- Choose water to drink instead of beverages with added sugar.
- Speak to your doctor about your diabetes risk factors, especially if you have a family history of the disease or are overweight.

To learn more about the YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program at the Milwaukee Y, please contact Ellie Duyser, RD, CD, healthy living director, at 414-357-2820 or at eduyser@ymcamke.org.

About the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee

The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee is a powerful association of men, women and children of all ages and from all walks of life joined together by a shared passion to strengthen the foundations of community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Since 1858, Milwaukee YMCAs have helped kids and families live healthy lives in spirit, mind and body. Supported in part through contributions to the Annual Campaign, the Y provides membership assistance and scholarships to programs like summer camp, child care and teen activities, to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to be healthy, confident, connected and secure. www.ymcamke.org.

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