



**NORTH SUBURBAN
YMCA**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Highland Park School Joins Forces with North Suburban Y to
Give Military Kids the Gift of Camp**

Northbrook, IL: April 2014 – Since 1986, the US Government has named April as the “Month of the Military Child,” in recognition of the special sacrifices and needs of children of our armed forces. One of the many challenges facing military families is how to connect with the outside community in the face of frequent relocations. At Wayne Thomas Elementary School in Highland Park, the Parent Teacher Association and others in the community are taking action to help bridge that gap, ensuring that military children based at Fort Sheridan feel welcomed and included in all school activities. Additionally, through a scholarship partnership with the North Suburban YMCA, several children from these families will be able to participate in summer camp.

“These are children of parents who are providing a valuable service for our country, and it’s important for our community to demonstrate our support and appreciation for everything their families do,” noted Hollie Williams, School Social Worker at Wayne Thomas. “We have about 70 kids from military families at our school, most of whom are required to move every three years. Our PTA has stepped up to support fee waivers and sponsor special events to welcome these students.”

Along with these efforts, local students came up with a plan to provide several of these children with the chance to attend summer camp. Due to the limited financial means of some military families, summer camp normally would not be a realistic option. When students Liza Greenberg, Gracie Dickman, and Lilly Dickman learned about the situation, they decided to raise funds for camp scholarships as part of their bat mitzvah service projects. The girls organized bake sales that eventually raised \$2500 toward camp tuition. Hollie Williams then contacted Sari Glazebrook, Membership Director at the North Suburban YMCA, to see how many children could be sent to the camp. The Y responded by matching the \$2500 raised with scholarships from the Y’s Strong Kids Fund, enough for five children to attend four weeks of day camp at the Y. The Y will also provide transportation from Fort Sheridan for the children.

“When I found out about the fundraising efforts, I was so impressed at how the school community had come together to support these military families,” noted Glazebrook. “The Y wanted to do all it could to help. This is what our Strong Kids Fund is all about: making Y programs accessible to individuals and families who otherwise could not afford them.”

The children will enjoy all the benefits of the Y’s camp programming, including games, sports, swimming, art and field trips. Based at its 80,000-square-foot facility in Northbrook, the North Suburban Y serves a 15-city region including Highland Park. The Y’s Strong Kids Fund provides financial assistance to families in need in the form of fee abatements for classes, camps, afterschool care, memberships, and other programs. Currently, one out of five individuals using the Y receives support from the Strong Kids Fund. Additionally, the national Y-USA organization supports military families across the country through its Armed Services and Department of Defense Outreach Initiative, which offers free Y memberships to eligible military families and personnel who may not have access to a nearby military facility. Several military families currently enjoy North Suburban Y memberships through this program or receive special military discounts.

According to social worker Hollie Williams, the children receiving the scholarships are excited and enthusiastic about camp. “These kids have changed the culture of the Wayne Thomas community in such a positive way.” said Williams. “We are so grateful to the YMCA, to our PTA, to our district’s students, and to everyone in the community who has stepped up to help these children and show them that we care.”



Photo Caption: Students, parents, and staff at Highland Park’s Wayne Thomas Elementary School join forces to support children of military families. From left: Liza Greenberg, Gracie Dickman, Principal Maureen Deely, Social Worker Hollie Williams, and Lilly Dickman.

About the North Suburban YMCA

The North Suburban YMCA is a not-for-profit entity and relies on donations to fund capital improvements and transform the facility. All board members are community volunteers, who donate their time, talents and financial resources. Located at 2705 Techny Road in Northbrook, the YMCA has served area families in its 15 city region for over 40 years. The Y is about youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility, providing programs and services that meet the needs of our community and are accessible to all. For more information or to make a donation, call Barb Flanagin at 847-272-7250, bflanagin@nsymca.org, or visit www.nsymca.org.