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**NORTH SUBURBAN
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Format, Exciting Technology Transforms YMCA Strong Kids Fundraiser

Northbrook, IL: January 2015 – Plans are well underway for the 2015 Ken & Alta Thiel Strong Kids Fundraiser, an annual community tradition that is getting a revitalizing transformation this year as it continues to support financial assistance for families in need at the North Suburban YMCA. Y staff members and volunteers are preparing for an exciting evening, with fun-filled activities and auctions that use groundbreaking technology to encourage interactivity and engagement. The event will be held at Pinstripes Bocce & Bowling in Northbrook on Thursday, February 26, beginning at 5:30pm.

“We can’t wait for people to see what’s in store for this year’s Strong Kids event,” exclaimed Sarah Leverenz, this year’s Strong Kids Program Chairperson. “It’s a completely fresh approach that I know everyone is going to love.”

The reimagining of the event begins with the time of year: previously held in the late spring, the Strong Kids fundraiser moves to February 26 with fun indoor activities to bring warmth to a mid-winter evening. The event’s new venue, Pinstripes, provides a host of new opportunities for good times, including bowling and bocce, that will be run in styles ranging from hybrid carnival-type games to traditional recreational bowling and bocce games to contests for the serious competitors who may sign up for bocce or bowling tournament play. In addition to games, guests will enjoy an open bar and a generous spread of hearty, delicious Pinstripes specialty foods, and a live auction with extraordinary offerings. In keeping with the active tone of the evening, dress will be casual and though guests may reserve special tables, plenty of seating will be open so that guests can mingle in a relaxed setting. Complimentary valet parking will also be available.

For another dramatic transformation, new technology provided by ABC will enable the event’s silent auction and other fundraising efforts to “go mobile.” For the first time, guests will be able to monitor silent auction bids wherever they are, right on their smart phones. Text alerts will notify bidders of the status of their bids, give them the ability to raise when outbid by another with a single click. Guests can apply maximum settings that will automatically raise bids by increments up to a pre-set limit, and can also bid remotely if they are unable to stay for the entire evening. In other technology innovations, the

event will feature large display screens to share the names of donors to the evening's "Fund the Need" campaign, recognize event sponsors, and provide updated fundraising highlights.

Even with these changes in tone and technology, the essential mission of the Strong Kids Fundraiser remains the same. The evening supports the Y's Strong Kids Financial Assistance Fund, which makes it possible for families in need to participate in the full range of YMCA programs. One out of five participants at the North Suburban YMCA receives some degree of assistance from the Strong Kids Fund, an annual expense of approximately \$520,000 per year. The Strong Kids event also honors extraordinary leaders who shape the community: for 2015, the Thiel Award for Leadership and Social Responsibility will be given to Dr. Paul Pryma, Principal of Glenbrook North High School and longtime friend of the Y.

Businesses and organizations are encouraged to participate in the Strong Kids Fundraising Event. Sponsorship opportunities and auction donations provide a showcase for a business's commitment to the community, appreciated by hundreds of event attendees. To discuss ways to recognize your business as a sponsor or donor, contact Barb Flanagin, bflanagin@nsymca.org. Tickets to the event are available on the North Suburban YMCA's website, www.nsymca.org.

About the North Suburban YMCA

The YMCA is a not-for-profit entity and relies on donations to make services available for all families and individuals in its 15-city region. All board members are volunteers, who donate their time, talents and financial resources. Located at 2705 Techny Road in Northbrook, the YMCA has served the northern suburbs of Chicago for over 45 years. The Y is about youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility, providing programs and services that address the needs of our diverse community and are accessible to all. For more information or to make a donation, contact Barb Flanagin at 847-272-7250 or bflanagin@nsymca.org, or visit www.nsymca.org.