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YMCA**
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Northbrook Commission and YMCA Partner to Promote Cultural Diversity Appreciation

Northbrook, IL: April 2017 – Plans are well underway for the annual Celebration of Cultures Faire on April 23, an afternoon of live performances, delicious food, and artistic expression that reflect the diverse cultural traditions found in the northern suburbs. The free event, which is expected to draw hundreds of guests, will be another accomplishment in a longstanding partnership between the North Suburban YMCA and Northbrook Community Relations Commission (CRC) to promote conversation, understanding, and appreciation between diverse populations in the broader community.

“Over the years, we’ve discovered a joint sense of purpose between the Y and the CRC,” reflects Howard Schultz, NSYMCA President and CEO. “We share a mission to build stronger communities, and the wide range of events we’ve presented have connected people in positive, engaging ways.”

The working relationship between the Y and CRC goes back to 2012, when the CRC was looking for a new venue to hold an event for Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month. The Y was an appealing option, not just because of the large available space in its gym but also the support of staff members specializing in art, dance, and community outreach.

Conversations with the Y evolved into a highly popular Taste of Asia festival, which was repeated each May through 2015. Guests flooded into the Y to enjoy traditional dance performances, specialty cuisine, art demonstrations, and unique items from vendors.

The success of Taste of Asia opened the door to other opportunities for collaboration between the CRC and the Y. Beginning in 2013, these included special events for African American History Month, shining a spotlight on the experience of African Americans living in the Northern Chicago suburbs and presenting a panel of guest speakers. 2014 saw a large attendance for “Journeys: Paths Taken to Chicago and the North Suburbs,” which featured a variety of speakers sharing inspiring stories of how they overcame discrimination to find success in their personal and professional lives.

In 2015, young Little League World Series players from the Jackie Robinson West team were welcomed by an overflow crowd for a presentation on the legacy of Jackie Robinson on baseball and society, complete with a hot dog lunch, videos, and interactive participation with the JRW All-Stars.

In 2016, the CRC made the decision to celebrate Northbrook's ethnic heritage by combined efforts to showcase the community's diversity. The result was the first Celebration of Cultures Faire, again held at the Y, which presented a truly global experience showcasing cultural presentations and food from 14 different countries, reflecting the cultural breadth and depth of Northbrook and the rest of Northern Chicago suburbs.

For 2017, the CRC has grown the Celebration of Cultures by adding a new partner in the Northbrook Public Library, which is presenting an international film festival as part of the celebration. The NSYMCA'S Community Gallery will also include a photographic display of "Immigrant Stories," personal immigration narratives from local families which will turn into a permanent exhibit at the Northbrook Historical Society.

"The Northbrook Community Relations Commission strives to foster understanding, mutual respect, cooperation, and positive relations among all residents of Northbrook," comments CRC board member Dr. Rochelle Singer. "It has been the CRC's honor to sponsor events each year that provide the opportunity for residents and members of other communities to come together and learn about each other's cultural backgrounds and interact in a setting of camaraderie. It has been a pleasure to hold these events at the NSYMCA, an entity whose mission is parallel to that of the CRC. The partnership with Howard Schultz and his staff has been invaluable and has resulted in positive interactions among the village, local businesses, Northbrook residents, and the members of the surrounding communities. We look forward to continuing to fulfill our mission with the 2017 Celebration of Cultures Faire and film festival."

"We are so excited by the evolution of our partnership with the CRC, and by the prospects for future projects," notes Schultz. "Every day at the Y, we experience the diversity of languages and customs that exist in our community. These special events give us a deeper understanding of the rich traditions of our neighbors and build bridges to connect us all."

The 2017 Celebration of Cultures Faire will be held at the North Suburban YMCA, 2705 Techny Road in Northbrook, on April 23 from 2:00 to 4:00pm. The event is open to the public and free of charge. For more event information, contact Erik Jensen at the Village of Northbrook, erik.jensen@northbrook.il.us.

About the [North Suburban YMCA](#)

The North Suburban YMCA serves 15 northern suburbs of Chicago, and for over 48 years has provided programs and services that address youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility every day. Working together for good is who we are: An association of people united in a common effort to help individuals become healthier, more connected, and confident. There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y: We have the national and local presence and partnerships to not just promise, but deliver, positive change, making sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. For more information, visit nsymca.org.



Photo Caption: The Northbrook Community Relations Commission has staged many inclusive, engaging events at the North Suburban YMCA, beginning with the Taste of Asia festival in 2012 (above).



Photo Caption: Personal stories and thoughtful dialogue created a positive community event for Black History Month, presented by the Northbrook CRC at the NSYMCA in 2014.



Photo Caption: Live dance performances with traditional costumes will be featured at the CRC's 2017 Celebration of Cultures Faire at the NSYMCA on April 23.