



Media Advocacy Toolkit



YMCA

How to Use this Toolkit

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) will be conducting media outreach for the ACSM American Fitness Index™ across the country; however, the effort to improve health and fitness in your community can be greatly enhanced by the local branches of the YMCA.

This toolkit offers tips and collaterals to help you build awareness of the issues facing your community and how the YMCA is leading the effort to improve health and fitness in its community.

These tips and materials are merely starting points. We encourage you to customize these materials to fit your branch and local initiatives, coalitions, etc. These materials will also be available for download at www.AmericanFitnessIndex.org.

Items included in the toolkit:

1. Customizable News Release – This sample release can be used in conjunction with your pitching efforts to succinctly share information about how your locale performed in the AFI data report and what the YMCA is doing to make local improvements.
2. Customizable Media Advisory – This sample media advisory can be used to help alert local media about your event, news conference, photo opportunity or similar publicity effort.
3. DVD – The enclosed DVD is footage from a June 2009 news conference conducted by the Benjamin Harrison YMCA Branch in Lawrence, Ind., part of the Indianapolis metropolitan area. Also presenting at the event is the mayor of Lawrence, Health by Design (a local coalition focused on the built environment) and the WellPoint Foundation (primary funding partner of AFI). The footage may be helpful for planning your own event.
4. Key Points Document – This document includes talking points for YMCA branches as used during the June 2009 news conference at the Benjamin Harrison YMCA Branch. Many of these same talking points may be appropriate for your event.
5. Event Checklist – This document is a short checklist of tasks to help prepare for your local event. Feel free to add to this list or eliminate items (e.g., refreshments) if unnecessary for your event.

This toolkit assumes that you are experienced in media relations, using social media and other publicity strategies. It also assumes that your YMCA branch is planning a news conference or similar event to highlight your efforts to improve community health and fitness.

If you do not plan to host a event and would simply like to assist in sharing the news about the ACSM American Fitness Index, or if you need tips for media relations and using social media, please refer to the Media Advocacy Toolkit available at www.AmericanFitnessIndex.org. In addition to media relations and social media tips, the Media Advocacy Toolkit also includes a customizable letter to the editor, a sample pitch script and a customizable news release.

If you have any questions, send an email to afi@acsm.org. Thank you for your help!

Customizable News Release

(May 23), 2011

For more information contact:

Insert Name at insert phone number or insert email address
YMCA Branch XYZ

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS URGE RESIDENTS TO GET FIT
YMCA Branch XYZ Aims to Improve Insert Metro Area Name's Ranking
on ACSM American Fitness Index™

INSERT CITY NAME – A group of Metro Area's most prominent health, fitness and wellness organizations – including the YMCA – today urged city residents to lead healthier, more active lifestyles.

In a recent ranking released by the American College of Sports Medicine's American Fitness Index (AFI) program, Metro area ranked Xth in health and fitness status among America's 50 most populous metropolitan areas. The AFI report is produced in part by funding from the WellPoint Foundation.

YMCA XYZ, Metro area and Organization ABC shared details of their efforts to improve community health and fitness. ACSM contends that the solution to improving physical activity levels and decreasing obesity rates lies at the local level.

The AFI program is designed to help communities identify opportunities to improve the health and fitness of their residents and expand community assets to better support active, healthy lifestyles. Based on figures related to healthy lifestyles and physical activity, Metro area scored insert overall score out of 100 in the AFI data report, compared to a score of 77.2 by top-ranked Minneapolis-St. Paul.

(Insert quote from your spokesperson if desired – Sample): "We want City name to improve its score year after year," YMCA Branch XYZ rep said. "Although City name will hopefully move up in rank next year, true success will be represented by improving against our current health and fitness levels for a better score, with incremental improvements year after year. We need local organizations and individuals to help make that happen."

Insert details about your YMCA Branch XYZ's program and efforts related to improving health and fitness.

If desired, include additional quotes (if desired) from spokespersons from partner groups, associations, city representatives and elected officials.

If desired, include additional information about efforts by partner organizations, associations, city representatives and elected officials.

Sample quote: "The data presented in the ACSM American Fitness Index highlight the important role of community-based policies, programs, and funding decisions in improving the health Metro area residents," said spokesperson.

The AFI data report reflects a composite of preventive health behaviors, levels of chronic disease conditions, health care access, as well as community resources and policies that support physical activity.

For a complete list of Metro area's strengths and challenges plus a breakdown of the components that helped make up its score, please visit the AFI Web page and download the Metro area report at www.americanfitnessindex.org/report.htm.

About YMCA Branch XYZ

Insert boilerplate

About the ACSM American Fitness Index™

The ACSM American Fitness Index™ (AFI) is an evidence-based measurement of the state of health and fitness in America's 50 most populous metropolitan areas, plus Greater Indianapolis. Created in partnership with the WellPoint Foundation, the AFI program is designed to improve health, fitness and quality of life by linking communities, government agencies, health promotion groups, healthcare providers, and others with best practice strategies and partner organizations. The 2009 AFI data report ranks and assigns a score to each of the 50 metropolitan areas, based on personal health indicators, community environmental indicators, and healthcare provider information. For more information about the ACSM American Fitness Index™, please visit www.AmericanFitnessIndex.org.

Customizable Media Advisory

For immediate release

May 23, 2011

MEDIA ADVISORY: 23, May

Actively Moving **Metro Area Name** to Better Health and Fitness

WHAT:

Metro area ranked **Xth** in health and fitness status among America's 50 most populous metropolitan areas according to the American College of Sports Medicine's (ACSM) American Fitness Index™ (AFI) report. The report is a snapshot of the state of health and fitness in America's 50 most populous metropolitan areas.

ACSM contends that the solution to improving physical activity levels and decreasing obesity rates may lie at the local level. What is being done to actively move **Metro Area** to better health and fitness?

YMCA Branch XYZ, **Metro Area** and **Organization ABC** will share the details of their efforts to improve community health and fitness including YMCA's Pioneering Healthier Communities initiative.

WHEN:

Day, Month X, 2011

Insert time

Additional details: For example, community walk to follow presentation

WHERE:

Location of Event

Insert address

WHO:

Speakers will include:

Full Name

Title, Name of organization

Repeat if multiple speakers

For more information contact:

Name of Media Relations Contact: Phone # or email address

Repeat if multiple contacts

Sample Talking Points

Name of Event

Month X, 2010

YMCA Branch XYZ

- The **City name** was one of 17 communities selected to be a part of the YMCA's Pioneering Healthier Communities (PHC) initiatives in 2008, and it is one of more than 100 communities nationwide participating in the YMCA's Healthier Communities Initiatives.
- The goal of PHC is to bring leaders together to focus on policy and environmental change in the places where we live, work, learn and play. PHC is part of *Activate America*[®] – the YMCA's response to alarming trends in the nation's health.
- Staff from the YMCA along with leaders in government, health care, nonprofits, education, business and other sectors in the community will work together in hopes of making **City name** the healthiest community in America.
- Through Activate America, YMCAs are redefining themselves to better support Americans of all ages who are struggling to achieve and maintain well-being of spirit, mind and body. Not only are YMCAs changing the way they work inside their facilities to influence and motivate health seekers to make positive changes, but also they are taking an active role in their communities to help support approaches that make it easier to overcome barriers to healthier living.
- YMCAs often see first hand both the physical and economic strain that chronic disease can place on individuals and households. Fortunately, we also celebrate successes that can come with positive lifestyle changes.
- Throughout our nearly 160 year history, YMCAs have helped improved physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and well-being for millions of Americans in diverse communities across the United States. And now, our nation's increasing chronic disease rates compel us to again be leaders in helping Americans overcome barriers to healthy living.
- Communities currently participating in these initiatives have had success in influencing community walkability and pedestrian safety, access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and physical education requirements in schools. For example:
 1. *A program at five Pittsburgh area YMCAs where they made high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables available to community members to purchase at 40% market price. This is in an urban area with limited access to healthy foods. Response to this program has been overwhelming.*
 2. *The Healthy U Program in Grand Rapids, MI, which serves about 3,400 low- income kids. Has resulted in a dramatic decrease in blood pressure and an increase in strength and flexibility. More than 90 percent of the participating kids improved school attendance, completed homework and chose not to smoke, drink or use drugs.*
- Today, YMCAs are collectively the nation's largest providers of health and well-being programs and they are known for their ability to bring people together in communities every day to generate solutions to challenges facing communities across the nation.

Event Checklist

- Arrange for and confirm place/time of event
- Confirm event logistics:
 - Podium
 - Microphones and sound equipment
 - Signage
 - Easels for signage
 - Seating
 - Refreshments
 - Videographer
 - Photographer
- Confirm speakers
 - YMCA rep
 - Other speakers
- Create talking points for each speaker
- Invite appropriate audiences such as partner organizations, local elected officials, etc.
- Create agenda for event
- Online publicity efforts
 - Include details in online news release
 - Post to your blog and/or web site
 - Post to your Facebook page, Twitter account and other social media sites
- Media outreach:
 - Send Media advisory at least one week before the event
 - Re-send media advisory on day before event
 - Send News release
 - Have printed copies of news release available at the event
 - Personally invite members of the media who you would like to attend