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YMCA OF GREATER LOUISVILLE SELECTS 2016 YOUTH CHARACTER AWARD HONOREES

Louisville, Ky. (Friday, Oct. 28, 2016) – YMCA of Greater Louisville CEO Steve Tarver announced the 2016 Youth Character Awards and presented awards to 14 outstanding youth from the Louisville area on Thursday evening, Oct. 27. In addition, Mayor Greg Fischer attended and presented a proclamation to longtime YMCA executive Jesse Alexander for his work at YMCA communities to achieve racial equality, starting back in the late 1950s.

Alexander was recently inducted into the National YMCA Hall of Fame for his work in large urban YMCAs in Louisville, Chicago, IL; Brooklyn, NY; and Washington, DC. He was responsible for running programs for African-American communities, starting as an outreach worker with youth in 1959. Alexander later joined the National Council of YMCAs as an executive for racial minority concerns in 1969. He also served as director of the National Council of YMCAs Human Rights Unit, for the concerns of women in the YMCA. Much of Alexander's work in the YMCA focused on the area of race relations within the Movement where he provided leadership to YMCAs serving minority communities.

The recipients of the Youth Character awards were selected because they exemplify the Y's commitment to strengthening our community and embody the Y's core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. The honorees were not only winners of academic and sports awards, but were extraordinary volunteers and school leaders.

The award, for teens ages 13 through 17, comes with a \$1,500 scholarship. Here are brief profiles of each of the honorees:

Camille Baskin – Age 17, Eastern High School

Nominated by: Kenya Whitfield

Camille demonstrates all the character values of the YMCA, despite the obstacles that she has overcome. After the tragic loss of her father at the young age of three, she wanted to always make him

proud. She made it a point to work to serve her community and has made the honor roll since Kindergarten. Then, in her sophomore year, her mother was diagnosed with cancer. Camille remained positive and persevered, taking care of her mother and continuing to find academic success despite having to move and change schools. After defeating cancer, her mom decided to pursue a career at Hosparus and Camille started volunteering for the organization on a regular basis. She has also volunteered for her neighborhood Lodge, the Kentucky Science Center, Norton Hospital, Dare to Care and is an active member of her church. She has also been involved with the Science Olympiad team, bowling team, school Newspaper and was inducted to the National Honor Society. Camille shows her character and compassion to the world every day.

Forest Clevenger – Age 15, duPont Manual High School

Nominated by: Dennis Robinson

Forest takes his academics very seriously and when he did not make the school's academic team, he was quite distraught. After much soul searching, he found an unexpected way to continue that passion. The nearby middle school had recently lost their sixth grade quick recall coach. Forest not only started coaching, he began providing specialized study sessions to help these students realize their untapped potential. The team won their tournament and Forest chose to stay as their mentor rather than trying out for his own team again. Forest recently participated in the Yale Global Scholars Program in Singapore, the JCC Youth Summit on Environmental Practices and aced an international course on Organic Solar Energy. He is an accomplished pianist and trombonist. He has served as a Kentucky State Senate Page, a fellow with Hillary for America and as a delegate in the Kentucky Youth Assembly and Kentucky United Nations Assembly. He serves on the Mayor's Give A Day Board, is a member of Y-Corps and is founder and VP of Manual's Technology Student Association.

Samuel Hall – Age 16, DeSales High School

Nominated by: Susan Gasaway

Sam works to strengthen his community through his service. He recently participated in the YMCA Metro Youth Advocate Program, providing the opportunity to research important community topics and make proposals for policy change. His topic was heroin addiction and he had an integral role in presenting research findings. His group advocated for a partnership between a local rehabilitation facility and Metro Corrections to more easily facilitate rehabilitation. Sam has also spent the last two summers as a camp counselor for Camp Marc, a non-profit serving mentally handicapped adults. He serves on the We Day Board, empowering youth to make a difference in their local and global communities. He has also volunteered with Junior Achievement, St. Joseph Arithemea, the Passionist Earth and Spirit Center and the Louisville Nature Center. Sam is an exceptional student and currently has the top GPA in his school's junior class. He is a member of the golf team, volleyball team, environmental club, chemistry club, National Honor Society, BETA Club and serves on the Principal's Advisory Board.

Lizzie Hamilton – Age 17, Assumption High School

Nominated by: Martha Hamilton

Lizzie has served in many leadership roles. At home, she helps her younger siblings with homework and is a great role model, maintaining exceptional grades and work ethic. At school, she is a peer tutor to fellow students. She is also a leader among her peers, being outspoken about choosing an alcohol and drug free lifestyle. In addition, Lizzie is President of her school's Y-Club and serves on her school's recruitment and advancement councils. She has volunteered through Y-Corps, Water with Blessings, Habitat for Humanity, her church and a local elementary school. She is involved in her school's Fair Trade Committee working to promote a more just global economy. She has also volunteered to mentor younger students from Y-Club, in the hopes of continuing to strengthen more servant leaders for the

future. She maintains a 4.0 grade point average while taking all Honors classes and many Advanced Placement courses. Lizzie's has a demonstrated concern for others and treats everyone with respect. She is caring, reliable, responsible, trustworthy and a true servant leader.

Luke Huffman – Age 17, duPont Manual High School

Nominated by: Dennis Robinson

Luke believes that honesty and integrity are fundamental values that are more important than a grade on an assignment. The YMCA has been a central hub of character building and leadership for Luke. He has served as Council Member of the Louisville Metro Youth Advocates, the Youth and Adult Voices for Action Summit Leader and Director of the Hype Leadership Conference. He also serves as a representative for the NFHS Student Leadership Conference, National Honor Society Treasurer, FIAE Club President, Student Senate Secretary, Beta Club, Executive Council, Spanish National Honor Society and was a fierce competitor with the FBLA National Leadership Conference. Luke was chosen to represent our state at the National Federation of High Schools conference this past summer, which focused on building community, sportsmanship and academic success.

Mariyamo Issa – Age 18, Central High School

Nominated by: Lynn Johnson, Gayl Anderson, Jennifer Harned, Jim Gilbert, Kelly Jones

Mariyamo was born in Kenya, Africa, in a small refugee village. At the age of 5, an opportunity came for the family to move to the U.S., but unfortunately her mother had to stay behind. Mariyamo misses her daily and works hard every day to make her mom proud and help build a better life for her family. When she first came to America, life was difficult and learning English was a struggle. It didn't take her long to pick it up and by the sixth grade, she was taking honors classes and acing proficiency tests. Mariyamo is a member of the YMCA Black Achiever Program and has volunteered with the Chestnut Street YMCA Kid's Café, serving meals to youth in the neighborhood and encouraging others to get involved.

Nancy LoGuidice – Age 17, Sacred Heart Academy

Nominated by: John LoGuidice

Nancy is a service junkie and says that volunteering is good for the soul. She excels in school, dances and performs with the Oldham County Performance Troupe and works part-time. She has been involved in the Kentucky United Nations Assembly and has served on the Jefferson County Teen Court for two years as an attorney representing nonviolent juvenile offenders. She was able to help many trouble youth navigate an intimidating and frightening process. She currently serves as the Kentucky Youth Association Secretary, KUNA Deputy Secretary General, the Sacred Heart Y Club Secretary and a 2016 Governor of Girls State. As part of Inspire Kentucky, she has organized voter registration drives and met with legislators to lobby for legislation benefitting youth. She received national attention for her work on the Pritchard Committee, lobbying for state legislation that would require a student voice in all High School superintendents search committees. For her great work, she was awarded the Commonwealth Ambassador Award. Her love of service and knack for leadership has even inspired her younger brother to follow the same path.

Cameron Luker – Age 17, Saint Xavier High School

Nominated by: Tammy Pate

Cameron has always been a Y kid, having been engaged in Y Child Care, Camps, Youth Sports and Swim Lessons his whole life. He served as the first President of his school's Y Club and attended both KYA and KUNA. He is current Committee Chair for his school's Y Club and is an active Y member focused on his own good health. He is involved in the pep band, Young Democrats Club and the Environmental Club. He is taking a challenging class load, including 4 college level courses and has maintained an excellent GPA,

all while working as a pharmacy technician. This past summer he was a Governor's Scholar, where he helped with multiple service projects. He is currently working on his Eagle Scout Project at USpiritus and has held many leadership roles in Boy Scouts. Cameron has also volunteered through Epiphany's Youth Group, Vacation Bible School, the Burrito Riders, and both domestic and international mission trips. Cameron has a gift of relating to people and treats everyone with respect.

Lydia Mason – Age 17, duPont Manual High School

Nominated by: Dennis Robinson

Lydia has had a major impact on her community on both a macro and micro level. She is founder and President of the Best Buddies chapter at Manual and spearheaded their first Spread the Word to End the Word campaign, making her school more unified regardless of ability. She was appointed a Kentucky Commonwealth Ambassador, Chief Justice of the KY YMCA Youth Assembly Judicial Program, Secretary General at the Kentucky Model United Nations Assembly, President of Manual's Black Student Union, a 2016 Governor's Scholar, a Planned Parenthood Teen Council Member, an active advocate for LGBTQ rights, a Distinguished Young Woman of Louisville, and has spoken publicly on many important social and community issues. She is a National Merit Semifinalist, WWDL Novice Lincoln-Douglas Debate Champion, has won National speech contests and has received the President's Award for Educational Excellence, the Brown University Book Award, and Manual's Academic Letter. She balances everything while being employed, taking on big responsibilities at home, and still maintains a perfect 4.0 and is an AP Scholar with Distinction.

Jonathan Neal – Age 17, Central High School

Nominated by: Daphne Batey

Jonathan Neal is an excellent student, a class officer and a great role model. He started volunteering at the age of 12 with the Southwest Family YMCA Child Development Center and also volunteers for the Glory Youth Group, helping inner city youth follow their dreams. He is involved with Metro Youth Advocates, Youth Advocates of Louisville, the Louisville Youth Orchestra and has won the Jefferson Award for community service. Jonathan founded the All Lives Matter organization, to work to change the image of African American teenagers, advocate for respect all races and nationalities, and work to stop the violence with our communities. Since 2014, he has been advocating for a change in Louisville. He has spoken at many community summits, including the Idea Festival, on the violence that has been occurring in our city. Jonathan's aspirations are to run for Mayor of the City of Louisville and help find solutions and resolutions to make this great city even greater.

Madison Roy – Age 14, Whitefield Academy

Nominated by: Patricia Beckham

Madison has been actively involved in community service and outreach since she was only 7 years old. In 2011, she learned a student at her school had been diagnosed with leukemia. She started collecting donations, volunteering and recruiting others. Her commitment to help led her to co-author a book, *Flower: A Girl with Leukemia*. To date, she has donated more than \$10,000 towards Leukemia research and support. In 2012, Madison also began supporting the Stomp Out Sickle Cell organization, which led her to co-author her second book, *Petethra's Secret*. To date, she has raised over \$6,000 for the fight against sickle cell and has donated over 100 copies of her book. She has also served as a co-host and now host of WLOU New Joyful Praise radio broadcast, encouraging youth to get involved in their community, stay in school and care about their grades. In July, she started an initiative called the Youth In Action Network, inspiring youth ages 6 – 16 to volunteer and work for change. She also has a website workingforcauze.com which helps encourage youth to be good role models and citizens.

Karie Skelton – Age 17, Bullitt Central High School

Nominated by: Anita Stump

Karie serves as a National Honor Society member, the Treasurer for Bullitt Central Chapter of the Future Business Leaders of America, 2016 Governor's Scholar and was selected by Governors School for Entrepreneur & Entrepreneurship Academy at IUS. She advanced to the state level competition for International Business. She is on her school's Varsity Soccer and Cross Country teams. She is a JROTC cadet and has participated in multiple community service and leadership events, earning her the ranking of Assistant Captain. She is very active in her church, including leading bible study groups and serving on domestic mission trips. She volunteers for the Louisville Rescue Mission, local homeless shelters and even started volunteering for the Bullitt County Family YMCA in early 2015, doing administrative tasks and helping in Kids Club. Her exemplary work led her to be hired as staff late last year. She has been in Spanish Club since 2012 and helps teach Spanish to local elementary students.

Amzie Smith – Age 17, Ballard High School

Nominated by: Terri Sgro

Amzie is an excellent student with a heart full of kindness. At school, she is everyone's friend. She is an example for others to focus on the positive and treat everyone with respect. At church, she has inspired those in her worship group to deepen their commitment to their faith, regardless of the challenges they face. For Amzie, that challenge came about a year ago, when she was diagnosed with cancer. She has used her diagnosis as a platform to spread her simple message: be kind to others. Amzie volunteers through her church, with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and at school through Dance Maroon, which raises funds for pediatric oncology. She is involved with the school yearbook and newspaper, takes a rigorous curriculum, and pushes herself to do her best even on her most difficult days.

Sydney Tucker – Age 15, duPont Manual High School

Nominated by: Jennifer Tucker

Sydney has been shaped by her experiences in the special needs community from an early age, having three siblings diagnosed with Autism. Driven by her love and support, Sydney has strived to make a positive difference for those with special needs. She won a first place Science Fair award for her experiment with music and Autistic individuals. She is a published author and illustrator of *Up To Bat*, a book that promotes awareness for special needs children which has sold internationally. She is a Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest winner, won a public speaking medal from U of L and received a scholarship to the elite WKU Xposure High School Journalism Workshop. Sydney was featured on WLKY, in *O Magazine*, *Louisville Magazine* and was chosen to speak on the United States Autism & Asperger Association Sibling Panel. She has received numerous academic awards and maintains a 4.0 GPA. She is an active member of her church choir and volunteers at the Exceptional Teens and Adults Center. She has been involved with Emerging Young Leaders Program, the Westside Track Club, a KEY Club Board Member and was inducted into the Kentuckiana Chapter of Top Teens of America.

ABOUT THE Y

The Y is the nation's leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. The Y is dedicated to building healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities.