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Press Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Middletown Partners with the Community YMCA for After School Programs at Eight Schools

Middletown: The Thorne Middle School 8th grade Envoy delegates to the Model UN recently met for their weekly meeting to discuss their experiences in the program's annual conference in Hershey, PA. At the same

time, down the hall their classmates in the Leaders Club were brainstorming ideas for community service projects. During the week, on varying schedules, the younger Middletown students remained in their elementary schools after school to participate in karate class (pictured right), keep an international beat to the aerobic dance class called Zumba and find their center in yoga (pictured left). All are part of the new partnership established with Monmouth County's largest school district and the Community YMCA (CYMCA) outreach program where the CYMCA personnel provide enrichment and recreational programs at the school district's facilities.



"It's terrific," explains Middletown Village parent Debbie DeRugeriis whose young son, Jimmy, attends the Zumba classes after school. "The best thing is that it takes place right after school and there is

no interruption. He is enjoying it and wants to return for the next session.

Village school began offering the CYMCA programs after school to their students this fall, following a successful pilot program at three elementary schools and two middle schools in the district. Currently six of the 12 Middletown elementary schools (Lincroft, Nut Swamp, Village, Fairview, New Monmouth, and River Plaza) offer after school programs which vary according to grade levels and the interests of the students. In addition to the more physical classes previously mentioned, art and community service programs are offered at the schools that request them. The elementary school programs run for 8 weeks and cost between \$80-90 per student. Nut Swamp last year devoted their community service to fundraising for a local Middletown high school student stricken with cancer.

In the middle schools, a Leaders program operates at Bayshore Middle School, which last year concentrated on a community service project which entailed the collection of blankets, and towels for the local SPCA population. (The results of the collections, along with one of the lucky recipients are pictured to the right). That program, like one operated at Thorne Middle School allows the children to decide on what community



service they will perform.

CYMCA instructor Oliris Ramos explains, “The students brainstorm and develop ideas. Then they research what they need to do make their ideas happen. What costs are involved? What materials are needed for the project? The whole idea is to empower them so they are more independent when they get to high school.”



In the photo at the left, Thorne Leaders Club students are busy creating flyers announcing a bowling outing fundraiser for the entire middle school. The proceeds of the outing will enable the students to carry out their community service plans. Other projects have included writing letters to soldiers in Iraq and doing plantings around the school. In the next session the leaders will be paired with the school’s special education students to do similar projects and activities.

Thorne is currently the only middle school in Middletown where CYMCA offers the Model UN Envoy program. The program is a precursor for the high school Model UN program which CYMCA currently operates in six Northern Monmouth High Schools including, Christian Brothers Academy, Holmdel High School Red Bank Regional, Red Bank Catholic, and Shore Regional. (It is noteworthy, that Middletown’s two high schools currently operate their own Model UN programs.) During the eight week program, students learn about the functions of the UN and prepare resolutions on world problems which they present in a culminating event at the YMCA regional conference of Mid-Atlantic States in Pennsylvania, which 1300 students attend. Thorne Middle School represented CYMCA’s first and only Envoy group. Its seven members joined the high school students for the weekend conference in January where they engaged in debate with other participating Envoy delegations. They were able to observe the high school portion of the event which simulates the functioning UN including the General Assembly and various committees. Thorne’s students were expected to dress professionally for the event and arrive with research on a particular country.

CYMCA instructor Jackie Normyle states, “I was very proud of our team. They came well-prepared and comported themselves very well. They even garnered the only two awards given to Envoys at the conference, with Raquel Yuhas named as Premier Diplomat and Steven Goldstein winning the Outstanding Delegate award.”

Raquel commented, “I liked debating and would have loved to attend even more meetings. The experience has convinced me to become a lawyer.”



Alexis Gilch commented, “We really didn’t know much about the program when it was first presented to us, but after this experience I would definitely love to do this in high school.”

Holding their certificates of participation in the YMCA Model UN conference of 2009 are Thorne students (left to right) Lindsay Pachael, Sarah Conger, Michael Pappas, Alexis Gilch, Raquel Yuhas. Missing from the picture were Steven Goldstein and Emily Lavin.

Rosa Urena, CYMCA Senior Director of Membership and Market Development has worked closely with Middletown Superintendent Karen Bilbao to develop the partnership relationship over the past two years.

She comments, “This program is a great example of the YMCA outreach in filling needs that exist in the community. Middletown is really enjoying the programs we offer to their students at their own facilities. We are delighted that our relationship continues to grow.”

Superintendent Bilbao is mutually enamored with the evolution of the CYMCA-Middletown partnership. She states, “Rosa and her staff have been terrific and they provide quality and inexpensive programs that our students truly enjoy. The partnership has been very beneficial for our school community.”

The school community includes staff, as CYMCA has been receiving increasing requests to provide yoga classes for teachers after school. Even Superintendent Bilbao and her hard working central office have directly participated. Pictured right) on Monday evenings, the library tables at High School North are moved aside, mats are splashed down and some well-deserved meditation flourishes.

