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Ohio Avenue Youth Center

Directions for Youth & Families announces the opening of its newly renovated Ohio Avenue Youth Center, 657 South Ohio Avenue, Columbus, 43205.

"We are most grateful to the American Electric Power Foundation, Limited Brands Foundation, and Nationwide Insurance Foundation for their major gifts to the capital campaign to renovate the building. We sincerely thank everyone who contributed to improvement of the facility for neighborhood youth.

"Young people appreciate after-school programming, homework help, computer lab, art, music, dance, health, and fitness activities at the center. Leadership development programs help them build on their strengths and prepare for the future. Many of the young people in the immediate neighborhood face challenges including violence and drug abuse. The center provides opportunities that they do not have elsewhere, said Steve Votaw, CEO of Direction for Youth & Families.

"We know the value of after-school programs for positive development of our youth. National and statewide surveys have shown that 30% of school-age youth in Ohio whose parents work are unsupervised during the after school hours (5% higher than the national average). Parents whose children did not participate in after-school activities noted that they would like their children to participate in such programs if affordable ones were located in their neighborhoods. Surveyed parents included fun and personal enjoyment, staying safe and out of trouble, providing academic enrichment, improved social skills, and improved physical health and fitness as the benefits of after-school programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2004; Ohio Afterschool Network, 2006).

"The Ohio Avenue Youth Center is open to all youth ages 7 – 18 without cost to their families. *We Believe in Kids!* was the guiding force behind the capital campaign and programs at the center," said Votaw.

The mission of Directions for Youth & Families is to empower families and their children to make sound choices and achieve promising futures. Services include counseling, prevention, and family strengthening programs provided in clients' homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Programs address substance abuse, family violence, anger management, child abuse, neglect, delinquency, family dynamics, parenting and life skills issues. For more information, www.dfyf.org or 614-294-2661.

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