



YMCA

We build strong kids,  
strong families, strong communities.

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**CONTACT:**

Diane Hurles  
Donor Relations Manager  
YMCA of the USA  
312-419-8374  
diane.hurles@ymca.net

## **YMCA of the USA to expand college access program for underserved populations**

*Grant from Lumina Foundation will be used to integrate  
College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> into national programming*

**CHICAGO (April 29, 2009)** –YMCA of the USA (Y-USA), the resource office for the nation’s 2,686 YMCAs, has announced an important addition to the programming and services YMCAs provide to connect underserved youth to higher education opportunities. With a grant of more than \$5 million over three years from Lumina Foundation for Education, Y-USA is integrating College Goal Sunday into national YMCA programming. College Goal Sunday is a national, volunteer-driven program that assists students and families in applying for financial aid.

“Research has shown that both the high cost of college and the complexity of the application process serve as real barriers to college attendance for many low-income families and students,” said Jamie Merisotis, President and CEO of Lumina Foundation. “College Goal Sunday and its vast network of volunteers take the mystery out of the financial aid application process and helps students with the greatest need understand that a college education is achievable.”

The overarching goal of the College Goal Sunday program is to assist students from low-income, underserved and non-traditional backgrounds to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid forms, so that these individuals can increase their chances of enrolling in college.

At College Goal Sunday events, typically held within two weeks of the Super Bowl, families are educated about the federal aid process and receive individual assistance in completing the Free

Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). College Goal Sunday began in 1989 and currently reaches more 35,000 prospective college students in 37 states and the District of Columbia

Ultimately, the YMCA of the USA's management – and the program's expansion – will allow for more students in more cities and states to receive the assistance they need to complete financial aid applications. Through the nation's 2,686 YMCAs, a larger number of students, particularly from low-income and underserved backgrounds, will have the opportunity to access and achieve success in post-secondary education.

"In adopting College Goal Sunday, the YMCA inherits a robust, well-staffed and highly regarded program that perfectly complements the YMCA's strategic goals to help individuals, families and communities realize their full potential, said Neil Nicoll, President and CEO of YMCA of the USA. "This program has a significant impact on the lives of individuals and communities, and it will add to our continuum of programming that assists youth in attaining their educational and career goals. We look forward to working with Lumina Foundation in rolling out the program in the year ahead so that YMCAs, regardless of their current educational access programming, can find a way to participate and make college a reality for thousands of youth."

For the past several years, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) has administered College Goal Sunday. They will remain a valuable partner under YMCA of the USA's leadership.

"In partnering with the YMCA to expand College Goal Sunday, Lumina Foundation aims to take advantage of the YMCA's breadth and depth, as well as its national and international reach, to give more young people in more states access to the educational opportunities that are often critical to building healthy and successful adults and families," Merisotis said.

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**ABOUT COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAY:** The College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> program was created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association in 1989 with funding from Lilly Endowment, Inc., and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education.

**ABOUT LUMINA FOUNDATION:** Lumina Foundation for Education, an Indianapolis-based private foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access to and success in education beyond high school. Through grants for research, innovation, communication and evaluation, as well as policy education and leadership development, Lumina Foundation addresses issues that affect access and educational attainment among all students, especially underserved student groups such as minorities, students from low-income families, first-time college-goers and working adults. The Foundation believes postsecondary education is one of the most beneficial investments individuals can make in themselves and that a society can make in its people.

**ABOUT YMCA OF THE USA:** YMCA of the USA is the resource office for the nation's 2,686 YMCAs, which serve 21 million people each year, including nearly 10 million children under the age of 18. YMCAs respond to critical social needs by drawing on their collective strength as one of America's largest not-for-profit community service organizations. Through a variety of programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, family strengthening, and health and well-being for all, YMCAs unite men, women and children of all ages, faiths, backgrounds, abilities and income levels. From urban areas to small towns, YMCAs have proudly served America's communities for nearly 160 years by building healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Visit [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net) to find your local YMCA.