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Statement to the Community on South Mountain YMCA After School Care Program

(MAPLEWOOD, NJ) Sept. 1, 2022 - The South Mountain YMCA strives to serve all families that need After School Child Care. We cannot do this without the support of many factors, including adequate staff to run our programs. We understand that having to delay the opening of our after school care program at two off-site locations creates a hardship on those families who were counting on the Y for care when the school year begins.

Like many other communities and school districts across the country, the Y continues to face employee shortages. Our staff are essential to operating our child care programs and hiring and recruitment efforts have been a consistent focus at the Y. Below is a list of our hiring efforts to date:

- We've extended our \$2,000 sign-on bonus for newly hired child care staff to Sept. 15.
- We are offering a \$1,000 referral bonus for current staff who refer a job candidate during Sept. 12-16.
- We've significantly increased staff wages at our after school care sites.
- We are recruiting certified teachers in the public schools to help provide two hours of homework and tutoring support after school, and they would be compensated for their time.
- We continue to offer weekly walk-in interview times to make the hiring process more efficient and accessible.

We are actively working with the South-Orange Maplewood School District to find solutions so we can get back to a position where we can support all families. This includes identifying viable space to accommodate more students in our programs. Since 2015, to meet the rising demand for after school care in our community, we have been investing in and developing suitable spaces to expand our after school program to more children, and we continue to look for additional space in the schools or off-site locations. In 2016, we identified an off-site location, however we

determined that after working with building and planning officials, the space would not be able to properly serve our needs. The recent partnership with St. Joseph's Catholic Church School in Maplewood has allowed us to expand our program, but also cost over \$130,000 in licensing and upgrades.

The Y is a longtime community partner with the district and many other local organizations. During the pandemic we partnered with the school district and others in a number of significant ways, notably operating virtual learning support at school locations, working with the Achieve Foundation to ensure all Free and Reduced Lunch Families received 100% Financial Assistance, and leading food distribution and blood drive efforts. In the 2021-2022 school year we awarded over \$150,000 in aftercare scholarships alone, through money raised for our Financial Assistance fund.

We know how important child care is for working families and we continue to explore all options that will enable us to safely open our aftercare programs to more families who count on the Y.

James Goodger,
District Executive Director
South Mountain YMCA