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Attn: News Desk

YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids announces first international alliance with YMCA Mexico counterpart

Grand Rapids, MI - The YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids has formed its first YMCA International Alliance with the YMCA of León, Mexico. León was chosen because both YMCAs are entering into significant capital campaigns.

“The YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids has taken the first bold step in crossing the border into Mexico to build an alliance with the YMCA of León, Mexico,” said Ron Nelson, President/CEO of the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids. Ron went on to say, “The YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids is proud of this new *YMCA International Alliance Agreement* and this marks the beginning of the organization’s new international approach. The Board of Directors fully understands that the YMCA needs to develop international alliances as we become more of a global community.”

During the three-day *YMCA International Alliance Agreement* fact-finding mission to the YMCA of León Mexico, Ron Nelson, President/CEO of the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids; James Dunlap, Regional Group President for Huntington Bank and YMCA Board Chairman; YMCA Board Member Dr. Jacquelyn Taylor, PhD., President of Taylor Global Consulting; and Marcy Ann Yanus, Associate Executive Director, Visser Family YMCA Branch, have set into motion an agreement that binds both parties to the development of a plan that will be released in 45 days.

The Grand Rapids YMCA team met with Licenciado Francisco Javier Allard, Director of Industry and Investments, city of León, and YMCA of León staff members and volunteers Bruno Lopez, Secretary General; Joel Vilches, Board President; Raymundo Banda, Board Secretary; and Lourdes Rocha, Board Treasurer.

James Dunlap, Regional Group President for Huntington Bank and YMCA board chairman, noted, “We were extremely pleased with the outstanding cooperation of the León government representatives in their participation in this YMCA cross-border alliance. YMCA of León is currently initiating a first-ever 1.8 million dollar capital campaign to build a new “green” YMCA in León. The goal of the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids’ exploratory mission was to find a way to assist the YMCA of León’s staff and board in learning about YMCA philanthropic campaigns and green building techniques. This is a unique opportunity for both YMCAs to partner in the development of cultural understanding, possible economic partnerships, and international relationships.”



This fall, YMCA of León staff members and volunteers will come to Grand Rapids for a similar visit to share information and recommendations on building construction, especially as they relate to “green building,” and to share strategic plans and goals that will work toward the success of the alliance.

YMCA International Alliance Agreement Background:

The city of León – officially named León de los Aldama, but nicknamed “the Shoe Capital” – is the fifth most populous city in Mexico and features large factories that produce shoes, boots, belts, jackets, and other leather accessories.

In 2005 the Kresge Foundation awarded a five-year, \$10 million grant to the YMCA of the USA to advance philanthropy in Mexico and build the YMCA of Mexico’s capacity to incorporate fundraising into its business model, working in partnership with Mexican YMCAs. The Kresge Mexico Philanthropy Development Initiative aims to catalyze the YMCA’s capacity to expand and sustain youth, family, and community development services in Mexico by 2010 by sharing best practices in fundraising, staff, and volunteer development, creating philanthropic strategic alliances, introducing new fundraising technology, and strengthening partnerships among U.S. and Mexican YMCAs.

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Background:

Founded in 1866, the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids is composed of eight branches that serve 95,173 residents in the Greater Grand Rapids community. YMCA core programs include: aquatics, child care, health and wellness, arts and humanities, and youth/adult sports. All program curricula is structured to develop the YMCA’s core values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility. The vision of the YMCA is to be the community leader in building strong kids, strong families, and strong communities. Visit www.grymca.org.

Background:

The Kresge Foundation is a private foundation that supports communities by building the capacity of nonprofit organizations in six particular fields of interest: health, the environment, arts and culture, education, human services, and community development. The Kresge Foundation Challenge Grant Program supports nonprofit organizations that are engaged in comprehensive campaigns designed to support institutional growth through the construction of new facilities, as well as the acquisition or renovation of existing facilities, the purchase of real property, and the purchase of major integrated equipment systems.