ATLANTA, Ga. - Feb. 11, 2013 - The YMCA of Metro Atlanta today announced the kickoff of the 2013 Why It Matters annual giving campaign. Gifts to the campaign will provide scholarships to children, adults and families in need of financial assistance, removing economic barriers to participate in YMCA programs. Longtime board members Charlie Yates Jr. and Carol Cookerly will co-chair the YMCA’s effort to raise $2.7 million for financial aid.

Atlanta native Charlie Yates Jr. grew up as a YMCA member, playing basketball after school and attending the YMCA’s resident camps as a kid. His first job was serving as a camp counselor at the Roswell YMCA. In 2000, he joined the YMCA of Metro Atlanta’s Board of Directors and was elected chairman in 2009. Recognized for his continued dedication to the YMCA, he was awarded the Bransby Christian Leadership Award in 2012, the highest honor the YMCA of Metro Atlanta gives volunteers.

Carol Cookerly, President of Cookerly Public Relations, joined the YMCA of Metro Atlanta’s board in 1996. She was honored with the Bransby Christian Leadership Award in 2011 for her ongoing service to the YMCA. Moreover, she has helped guide the YMCA’s strategic direction and has chaired three previous annual campaigns. In 2004, she received the YMCA of Metro Atlanta’s volunteer of the year award for her contributions as chair of the formerly called Partner with Youth annual giving campaign.

“The Y has always had an annual campaign that helped meet the need of financial assistance for scholarship recipients,” Cookerly said. “But, this marks the first year we are pulling together our 23 local Ys and launching a system-wide brand and effort to secure the funds we need to continue to play a pivotal role in Atlanta by helping individuals, especially children, reach their greatest potential.”
The newly branded campaign, Why It Matters, allows the YMCA community to focus on communicating precisely what the YMCA offers and how its programs impact metro Atlanta.

Since 1858, the YMCA of Metro Atlanta has been a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Today, the YMCA is the single largest provider of Head Start in metro Atlanta. It delivers high-quality, after-school academic programs to more than 7,500 youngsters and provides 11,300 children with summer day camp opportunities.

“Because the Y offers so much, it’s almost impossible to effectively tell our story,” Yates noted. “But the more people look at the Y, the more they are extremely impressed with our depth and reach. Explaining ‘why’ the Y is so important for our community is key to our continued success.”

Reflecting its Judeo-Christian heritage, the YMCA commits to serving all, actively seeking to identify and involve those in need. More than 20 percent of YMCA’s metro Atlanta community benefits from scholarships.

“By reaching this year’s Why It Matters annual giving campaign goal, we can help people benefit from our wide array of programs,” Cookerly noted.

“Importantly,” Yates added, “Y programs provide a network of support to individuals and families that truly improves people’s lives. Plus, we have long been respected for handling donor dollars with extreme efficiency.”

About the YMCA:

The Y is a powerful association of men, women and children joined together by a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility. Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and connect. Visit http://www.ymcaatlanta.org or call 404-588-YMCA (9622).

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