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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wenatchee Valley YMCA, Wenatchee School District and Eastmont School District Partner For 'Every Kid Swims' Initiative

Wenatchee, Wa. – The Wenatchee Valley YMCA, the Wenatchee School District and Eastmont School District are partnering to implement an innovative program to prevent youth drowning called “Every Kid Swims” designed to ensure that every child in the lower Wenatchee Valley is water safe by the fifth grade.

Water safety means that children will clearly understand the procedures, precautions and policies associated with safety in, on and around bodies of water, where there is a risk of injury or drowning. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages 1-4 and the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages 5-14. While twenty-three percent of child drownings happen during a family gathering near a pool, living in a community with one of the largest rivers in North America running through it means we need to be extra vigilant. Drowning is the cause of death for most boating accidents.

That’s why the Wenatchee Valley YMCA CEO Dorry Foster and her team are prepared to work with the Wenatchee and Eastmont School Districts so the parties can implement this unique program when the new YMCA facility is completed in the winter of 2025.

“This groundbreaking initiative – that every child in the Wenatchee valley will have the opportunity to learn water safety skills – is an example of the power of partnerships,” said YMCA CEO Dorry Foster. “The YMCA is grateful to the Wenatchee and Eastmont School Districts, who recognize this initiative will save lives, give parents peace of mind, and address a critical

community need,” Foster added. “This is an example of one of the many reasons we are building a new YMCA in our community.”

Under the “Every Kid Swims” initiative, the two school districts will partner with the Y to bus fourth or fifth graders to the Y’s new downtown Wenatchee facility, where they will learn the basics of water safety and advance their swimming skills.

“Teaching children how to swim from a young age is extremely important for their safety and overall health,” Wenatchee Superintendent Dr. Kory Kalahar said. “Through this partnership with the Y, we are removing barriers and ensuring our students have equitable access to learn these lifesaving skills.”

Eastmont Superintendent Dr. Becky Berg agreed, and said making sure children are water safe is especially important in a region like ours.

“With so much natural beauty and access to rivers and lakes, it is imperative that the children of the Valley learn about water safety. We look forward to collaborating with families, the YMCA, and the Wenatchee School District to better equip our children to enjoy every opportunity,” Berg said.

The YMCA will break ground in the late spring of 2024 to build a new, state-of-art 45,000 SF, two-story facility on the now vacated grounds of the Chelan PUD at 5th and Wenatchee Avenue. Construction is expected to take about 18 months. The new YMCA will have two pools – one a lap pool and the other a family-friendly, zero-entry pool for swimming lessons for babies to adolescents.

If you would like to learn more and schedule an interview with Dorry Foster to discuss the Every Kid Swims program and what the new Wenatchee Valley YMCA facility means to the health and well-being of the Wenatchee Valley, please contact her at dorry@wenymca.org or 509-662-2109.

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