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Southington-Cheshire Community YMCAs Announce Emergency Child Care for Hospital Staff and First Responders During COVID-19 Crisis

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2020

SOUTHINGTON, CT -- On Wednesday, March 25, 2020 the Southington Community YMCA opened its child care doors again to serve hospital staff in need of child care during the Covid-19 crisis that is impacting the local community and nation.

The program has been approved and developed in conjunction with the Office of Early Childhood, at the request of Governor Lamont and in partnership with Hartford Healthcare. The Governor announced earlier in the week the launching of Project 26, a temporary program designed to

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support hospital staff and first responders who are on the front lines of battling the coronavirus. Currently, the program is only offered to licensed child care centers that are located within 3-miles of a hospital and have been approved by OEC for these services. Each site can take a maximum of 30 children and cannot have more than 10 children in a room to follow the recommendation of social distancing.

Project 26 is for hospital staff first, then first responders as needed. Each hospital has information about the process that directs parents to call 211 or family and friends in seeking childcare. If they are not able to secure childcare, they may enroll in Project 26. After children of hospital staff enroll, following the maximum per space guidelines, children of first responders and children of nursing home staff and home health aides, and essential supply workers, may then seek to enroll in this program.

“We are proud and honored to do our part in helping those on the front lines of this battle against Covid-19” stated Mark Pooler, CEO of the Southington-Cheshire Community YMCAs. “As a YMCA, we need to be here to fulfill community needs, especially during a crisis like this. I am proud of our staff for their willingness to step up to the challenge and be there for the hospital workers and first responders in need. Our partnership with Hartford Healthcare has been a crucial part of our YMCA being approved as one of the sites and we thank them for their continued support” stated Pooler.

A requirement for this Emergency Childcare is that it must be offered at NO

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cost to the families of hospital workers and first responders. "One of our big concerns was funding and being able to pay our staff and provide supplies for the program. Like many others, we have had to shut down all other operations and revenue producing programs at our Y" stated Pooler. Funding for the Project 26 will be coming from CREC, Capital Region Education Council, as they are acting as the fiduciary organization to handle payments. However, no terms or contract with CREC and the YMCA have been finalized at this time.

"My first call was to **Susan Sadecki** from the **Main Street Community Foundation** and as usual, they came to the rescue" said Pooler. "We are so grateful to Main Street Community Foundation for expediting a bridge grant from the Barnes Memorial Trust to fund the startup costs associated with establishing emergency childcare services for front line hospital workers and first responders. This program would not be running right now without their support and generosity" stated Pooler. The Main Street Community Foundation has been serving the needs of Southington and other communities since 1995. "The Main Street Community Foundation Board and Barnes Trust Advisory Committee stands ready to deploy the necessary resources during this crisis to ensure our community partners can respond quickly to emerging needs" stated Susan Sadecki, President and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation.

All sites must follow licensing regulations for child care and pay particular attention to monitoring for signs of illness,

designating space for children who become ill, cleaning and sanitizing procedures, and all other health regulations. In addition, all children and childcare staff will be checked at the door for temperature and any observable illness. All staff and children must adhere to regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based sanitizer. There will be limited access to classrooms! A staff member will greet families at the door to help transition children to the classroom. All protocols for cleaning and disinfection of the child care center including the sanitization and disinfection of toys must be followed according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the State Department of Public Health guidelines.

The YMCA is partnering with Hartford Health Care to get the word out to their employees, but the program is open to other hospitals as well. "I am grateful for the partnership we have with Southington-Cheshire Community YMCA. Because of their commitment to our community and their innovative thinking, we are able to offer child care to our employees who are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 outbreak. Assistance with child care options takes a significant amount of stress off of our staff and I am deeply grateful for this support and collaboration as we continue to manage this pandemic" stated Gary Havican, President, The Hospital of Central Connecticut and MidState Medical Center. Currently the site is offering emergency child care for ages 3 and up. The program is taking place at the YMCA's Learning Center at 30 High Street in Southington.

There is still room available but only a max of 30 children are allowed. "If we reach full capacity we will be working with OEC and looking at the possibility of opening a second site at the main YMCA on the second floor which is already licensed for child care programs like this" says Pooler. To register, contact the YMCA Learning Center at 860-621-8130 or email Chrissy Cassesse at Ccassesse@sccymca.org. For more information please visit www.sccymca.org.

About the Southington-Cheshire Community YMCAs

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across Southington and Cheshire, CT the Y engages men, women and children – regardless of age, income or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in our communities, the Southington-Cheshire Community YMCA was established in 1928 and has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. YMCA membership, camps, programs, and child care are welcoming, inclusive and open to all regardless of income.

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