

For Immediate Release
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Anytown Alabama High School Students Address Race Relations

Birmingham, Al, Wednesday, June 4, 2014 - A diverse group of students from across the Greater Birmingham area will gather at 9:15 a.m. to address the topic of race relations at the Racial and Ethnic Identity Session at Anytown Alabama. This session will create an open forum for high school students to engage in an honest dialogue on a topic that is considered taboo in many social settings. It will take place at Camp Hargis in Chelsea, AL. (928 Hargis Drive Chelsea, AL 35043).

Students will explore their own racial identities and examine what difference race makes to their experiences in life. "Because the 75 students are racially diverse, students have the rare opportunity to discuss in a respectful way a subject that Alabamians are typically hesitant to tackle. The students are challenged to come up with ways that they personally can make their schools and communities more fair and inclusive for all," said YWCA Central Alabama Director of Social Justice Joan Witherspoon-Norris. The goal of the interactive and often emotional exercise is to equip students with skills and insight to become effective leaders.

The evening events will also feature a culture celebration from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. Students will learn the value of appreciating other cultures and beliefs while celebrating their own.

Media is invited and encouraged to join in on the experience at both events.

Anytown Alabama is a week-long residential camp started by the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) in 1989, and is now the product of a partnership with the YWCA Central Alabama. At Anytown, students are challenged to consider how they can make their schools and communities more fair and inclusive for all through this interactive experience.

Students learn how to respond to difficult real-life situations with kindness, courage and respect. Interaction with a diverse group at Anytown also prepares students for life after high school, where cultural sensitivity and the ability to communicate with different types of people are crucial. Delegates participate in open dialogue, games and interactive workshops about social justice issues. Along with race relations, other life-changing topics to be covered include: immigration, religious oppression, sexism, classism and heterosexism.

About the YWCA

The YWCA Central Alabama is a United Way organization that is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. For over 110 years, the YWCA Central Alabama has been responding to the needs of women, children and families. The YW's programs and services serve women, children and families by providing: affordable child care for families; child care and after-school enrichment programs for homeless children; affordable housing; a broad array of domestic violence services; and social justice programs. For more information, please visit www.ywcabham.org, www.facebook.com/YWCACentralAlabama and www.youtube.com/ywcentralal or follow @YWCentralAL on Twitter.