

Merrimack Valley YMCA Child Care Director Cathy Flynn Named Children's Champion

Merrimack Valley YMCA Executive Director of Child Care, Cathy Flynn will be presented with this year's Children's Champion Award by the Michael B Christensen Family Support Center, a program of the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council (GLCAC). The award will be presented at the 5th Annual Children's Champion Award Ceremony, which will be held on Wednesday, April 4, 2018 at 8:00am at the Methuen YMCA, 129 Haverhill Street, Methuen. The award recognizes the contributions of an outstanding individual who has made a significant contribution in the Merrimack Valley in the areas of child abuse prevention, intervention, treatment and/or child advocacy.



Flynn earned the award for her tireless advocacy on behalf of children. In her role as Executive Director of Child Care at the Merrimack Valley YMCA, Flynn has worked to end food insecurity for children and families in the community by providing nutritious meals and snacks for children in YMCA child care programs, as well as teen dinners and a newly opened food pantry at the Lawrence Y.

As a facilitator of Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children program offered at the Merrimack Valley YMCA, Flynn is part of a team that has trained more than 2,000 people over the last ten years on the prevention of child sexual abuse.

She does all of this while overseeing child care operations at the Andover/North Andover, Lawrence and Methuen YMCAs and a YMCA after school program in Boxford, as well as an Early Learning Readiness and a Summer Learning Loss Prevention program.

Merrimack Valley YMCA President and CEO Gary Morelli said Flynn's efforts are a true example of the mission and cause of the Y.

"There is no one more deserving of this award than Cathy," said Morelli. "From educating children, to keeping them safe and fed, her passion and dedication to families in the Merrimack Valley knows no bounds."

The Children's Champion Award Ceremony is held every year in collaboration with the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, the Merrimack Valley YMCA, and the local Exchange Clubs as a kick-off for National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

This year, the Merrimack Valley YMCA will also be participating in Five Days of Action -- a national initiative to improve the health and well-being of kids. Five Days of Action focuses on preventing child sexual abuse by sharing tips on how adults can step up and speak out to prevent child sexual abuse.

The Merrimack Valley YMCA will be hosting events throughout the month of April to raise awareness and provide information on how to prevent child sexual abuse. These events include:

- Week 1 - Children's Champion Award Ceremony on April 4 at the Methuen YMCA
- Week 2 - Healthy Kids Day on April 14 at the Andover/North Andover YMCA
- Week 3 - Healthy Kids Day on April 21 at the Lawrence YMCA
- Week 4 - Stewards of Children Training on Apr 24 at the Methuen YMCA
- Week 5 - Keeping Kids Safe Training on Apr 30 at the Lawrence YMCA

The Merrimack Valley YMCA and the YMCA Guardians for Child Protection, with support from YMCA of the USA, Darkness to Light, the Redwoods Group Foundation, and Praesidium have made materials available to help adults learn more about preventing child sexual abuse. For more information about preventing child sexual abuse visit www.fivedaysofaction.org.

About the Y

With its headquarters located in Lawrence, Massachusetts, nestled in the heart of the Merrimack Valley, the Merrimack Valley YMCA is represented by the Andover/North Andover YMCA, the Lawrence YMCA, the Methuen YMCA, Camp Lawrence and Camp Nokomis on Lake Winnepesaukee, and Day Camp Otter in Salem, New Hampshire. Each of these branches and camps serve the needs of distinct and unique communities, making the Merrimack Valley YMCA an organization rich in cultural, social, and economic diversity. Through quality programs, services, volunteers, and staff, the Merrimack Valley YMCA is constantly working to help make healthier lives achievable for everyone.

About Darkness to Light

Darkness to Light is a nonprofit organization with the mission to empower adults to prevent child sexual abuse. Through education and awareness, the organization seeks to create a safer world for children to grow and thrive. Darkness to Light's flagship program, Stewards of Children®, is a one-of-a-kind, award-winning training that teaches adults to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. More than 1.4 million adults have been trained using the program. For more information, visit www.D2L.org.

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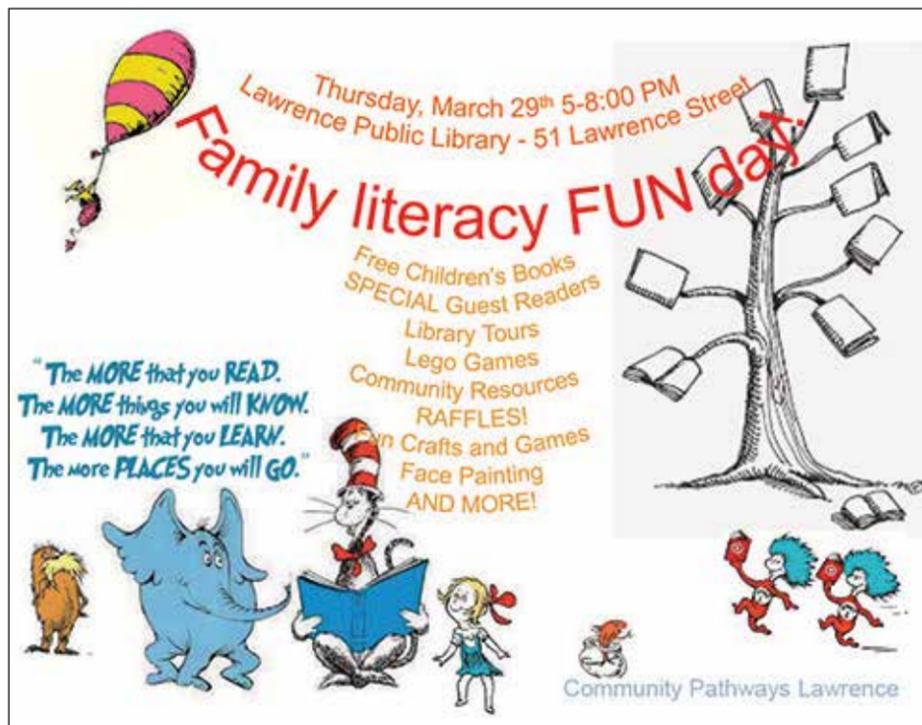
Community Pathways Lawrence is sponsoring its annual Family Literacy Fun Day, on Thursday, March 29, 2018, from 5 to 8 pm, at the Lawrence Public Library, located at 51 Lawrence Street. This free event focuses on making reading accessible and fun for kids, while emphasizing to parents the importance of early literacy.

The statistics are grim: About three in five of America's prison inmates are illiterate, according to the Washington Literacy Council. Research also shows that if a student is reading at grade level in the third grade, he/she will more likely to graduate high school.

These statistics underscore the correlation between literacy and poverty. It is a critical issue that educators and nonprofits are desperately trying to address in urban cities with large immigrant populations like Lawrence, where these gaps are even greater.

Family Literacy Fun Day will feature special guest readers, crafts and games, face painting, "Stories from the Street," and free books for children of all ages. For adults and families, the events will offer important information regarding community resources, prizes and library tours. Refreshments will be served and raffles will be held throughout the evening.

Community Pathways Lawrence (CPL) is a multi-focus community planning and advocacy partnership, which engages human service providers, educators and community stakeholders to integrate literacy and family support services. CPL shares resources and information, prioritizes needs of adult learners & families and sponsors common events. The partnership cultivates and values individual/family wellbeing and engagement, quality programming, access to services and education, family & career goals.



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