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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**YMCA of Greater St. Louis and YMCA of Southwest Illinois
Joining Forces to Become Gateway Region YMCA**

Membership will include access to all 25 branches in MO and IL

St. Louis, MO (August 27, 2015) – Beginning Sept. 1, the YMCA of Greater St. Louis and the YMCA of Southwest Illinois will begin operating as the Gateway Region YMCA. The combined association will have 25 locations throughout the bi-state region with branches covering St. Louis City, seven Missouri counties, and six counties in southwestern Illinois. Membership will now include access to all 25 locations.

“As two of the region’s leading nonprofits, the YMCA of Greater St. Louis and the YMCA of Southwest Illinois are excited to combine the strengths of our organizations to better serve the communities where we operate throughout the region,” said Tim Helm, president and CEO of the Gateway Region Y. “This will enable us to offer our members and guests more ways to improve their health, provide hundreds of enhanced classes and programs, and grow our ability to provide Y services to families and individuals in need in the community.”

The Boards of Directors of the two associations approved and originally announced the merger in 2014. The combination will make the Gateway Region Y one of the top 20 largest Y associations in the country. The association will serve more than 180,000 members, engage more than 8,000 volunteers and provide safe, reliable child care for more than 7,000 children. Combined, the two associations separately provided more than \$5 million in direct and indirect financial assistance last year through the Y’s scholarship program, which helps ensure no one is turned away from using Y programs and services based on their inability to pay.

The Gateway Region Y will host a free open house at its 25 locations on Sept. 12. The public is invited to try the Y for free all day, check out the branch amenities and learn about the many resources the Gateway Region Y has to offer its members and the communities it serves. In addition, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., visitors will have

the opportunity to participate in fun activities for the whole family, take part in fitness class demonstrations, enjoy free snacks and win prizes. Attendees 12 and older will receive a free t-shirt and children under 12 will receive a superhero cape (while supplies last) in recognition of the "Joining Forces" superhero theme the Y is using to announce the merger. Individuals who join will be able to take advantage of no joining fee through Sept. 30.

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About the Gateway Region YMCA

The Gateway Region Y is a nonprofit organization dedicated to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Featuring 25 traditional Y branches in Missouri and Illinois, along with two Campus Y student leadership facilities, the Community Services Y-Without-Walls serving East St. Louis and Y Community Literacy. Our Y also includes YMCA Camp Lakewood and Trout Lodge in Potosi, Missouri. The Carondelet Park Rec Complex and O'Fallon Park Rec Complex are owned by the City of St. Louis and operated by the Y. The Y is committed to serving people of all abilities. For those who qualify, we offer financial assistance so everyone has the opportunity to participate in Y programs, regardless of ability to pay. Our Y is a proud member of the United Way. For more information, please visit www.gwrymca.org or call 314-436-1177.