



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gateway Region YMCA Names Alpha Spagner as 2016 Joseph P. Sunnen Youth of the Year

Youth of the Year winners receive scholarships to Lindenwood University

St. Louis, MO (March 4, 2016) – The Gateway Region YMCA is proud to announce the 2016 Joseph P. Sunnen Youth of the Year winner – Alpha Spagner of the Downtown St. Louis YMCA. Spagner and 15 other branch winners were recognized at the Y's annual Youth of the Year Awards Dinner on Thursday, March 3.

The award recognizes young people who demonstrate exceptional leadership skills, volunteer at the Y and in their communities, and exemplify the Y's core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

"Congratulations to Alpha and all of the Youth of the Year recipients for making a lasting difference in their communities through leadership, volunteerism and other contributions," said Tim Helm, president and CEO of the Gateway Region YMCA. "At the Y, we recognize that all youth have great potential, and we look forward to hearing about the great things these youth leaders will do in the future."

The Youth of the Year award has been given in partnership with Lindenwood University since 2004. Each year, the university generously awards more than \$125,000 in scholarships to each of those selected as a Youth of the Year winner.

Spagner has been a four-year YMCA member, and involved in nearly every possible aspect of the Downtown Y. He is the current president of his Youth in Government chapter, has volunteered for several different programs, helped raise funds for the Y's Annual Campaign, and spoken at many different events. In all his endeavors, he embodies the spirit of the YMCA and the character of the very best of our membership.

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Y Branch Youth of the Year 2016 winners

Carondelet Park Rec Complex: T.J. Murray
Community Services: Eunique Rice
Downtown YMCA: Alpha Spagner
Emerson Family YMCA: Felesha Clark
Four Rivers Area Family YMCA: Aubrey Meyer
Jefferson County Family YMCA: Marissa Valenti
Kirkwood Family YMCA: Margie Curran
Mid-County Family YMCA: Cecilia Griffin
Monsanto Family YMCA: DaJona Bray
O'Fallon Missouri Family YMCA: Elizabeth Dyer
O'Fallon Park Rec Complex: Naija Triplett
South County Family YMCA: Daniella Chesney
St. Charles County Family YMCA: Kayla Shelton
West County Family YMCA: Kim Layton
Wildwood Family YMCA: Hannah Bullington
YMCA of the Ozarks: Katie Berry

Joseph P. Sunnen's vision and dedication to youth development programs inspired the YMCA to establish the Joseph P. Sunnen Youth of the Year Award. The award salutes young people who exemplify all that the YMCA stands for: opportunity, potential, leadership and service to community.

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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 24 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 of Greater St. Louis. For more information, please visit www.gwrymca.org or call 314-436-1177.

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