



Young Audiences Western New York

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KIDS 'KEEP IT MOVING' DURING NATIONAL PHYSICAL FITNESS MONTH

Young Audiences' dance residency aligns with goals of Michelle Obama's Lets Move initiative

BUFFALO, NY (5/19/11) – Young people in Buffalo are up and on their feet in a dance-based fitness initiative called *Keep It Moving!*. Young Audiences WNY has children, ages 6 to 14, learning about healthy choices and fitness after school. Made possible through support from the General Mills Foundation and the Children's Foundation of Erie County, *Keep It Moving!* addresses the clear need for young people, especially those living in poverty, to learn the skills for living a healthy lifestyle. The program aligns with the goals of Michelle Obama's *Lets Move* campaign and the New York State Learning Standards for Health & Fitness.

Throughout 35 sessions, *Keep It Moving!* students work with professional dancers to learn several different forms of dance. They are introduced to the Food Pyramid, healthy eating choices, portion control, and the importance of exercise for the body. Additionally, each student is challenged to set his or her own future fitness goals, and to document them in a personal journal. This process provides children with a manual for continued success, reinforces each session and builds literacy skills.

"[Students] appreciated the opportunity to focus on expressing their thoughts, and it became a serious component of the class," said lead teaching artist Cindy Hanna. "Journaling proved to be a great way for them to keep data and assessment for themselves."

With May being National Physical Fitness Month, both the President's council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition and Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* initiative have placed an added emphasis on the important role that physical activity plays in our Nation's health and wellness.

"It is great to see such strong support at the national level for our children's health and well being," said Young Audiences Executive Director Cynnie Gaasch. "We're pleased that *Keep It Moving!* can add to the national commitment to the well being of children, while showcasing how the arts can teach and reinforce healthy life choices."

The program, now in its second year of implementation, includes participants at Community Action Organization of Erie County's John F. Kennedy and Edward Saunders after school sites. At the JFK site, participants are learning Salsa with Sarah Haykel, African dance with Le Ballet Touba, and ballet with Configuration Dance Theatre. At the Edward Saunders site, students learned ballroom dancing with Kip Rababate and are participating in modern dance workshops with LehrerDance. Lead dancer, trained nurse and Physical Education specialist, Cindy Hanna worked with Young Audiences to create the curriculum, and opens and closes the school year with the after school students.

For more information about the *Keep It Moving* program or Young Audiences WNY visit www.yawny.org or call 716.881.0917.

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES: Young Audiences of Western New York is a not-for-profit arts-in-education organization whose mission is to make the visual, performing, and literary arts a part of young people's lives in order to enhance their development as creative and productive human beings. This mission is fulfilled every day within the eight counties of Western New York with performances, workshops, and residencies in educational, cultural, and community centers. In operation for 49 years, Young Audiences' teaching artists support children learning core curriculum subjects through the arts, with over 100,000 artist contacts for children and families each year. Visit www.yawny.org for more information about Young Audiences of Western New York.

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