



**NORTH SUBURBAN
YMCA**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Café Voca at the NSYMCA Offers New Opportunities
for Individuals with Disabilities**

Community Partnerships Provide Vocational Training and Employment

Northbrook, IL; April, 2022: Since its grand opening six months ago, many of Café Voca's trainees have found new work opportunities. Located in the North Suburban YMCA, Café Voca, the Y's lobby coffee bar, provides vocational training and employment experience for individuals with intellectual and developmental challenges. Café Voca serves free coffee and hot chocolate weekdays from 9-11am.

To date, Café Voca has implemented three 12-week employment training programs for individuals with disabilities, including those in the Asian Pacific special needs community who are 18 years of age or older. "Our ultimate goal is that the trainees will eventually achieve meaningful employment outside the YMCA community, while gaining a sense of accomplishment and contribution to the community," explained Ellen Mirochnick, the North Suburban YMCA's Special Services Coordinator.

The training program gives employees the opportunity to become proficient in making and serving coffee, while practicing customer service skills. They also learn how to write their resumes and practice interviewing techniques. "We stress a strong work ethic and good customer service skills which are essential for most jobs in the community. We also conduct mock interviews and work with the local school districts on resume preparation," continued Mirochnick. Trainees are currently recruited from the TrueNorth transition program, formerly NSSED and The Wheat Mission.

“Working one-on-one with customers, our trainees learn customer service skills and techniques to engage with others in the community. Interfacing with others is imperative for their self-esteem, and gets them out of their comfort zone to help them move forward,” stated Kathy Fielding, CEO of the North Suburban YMCA.

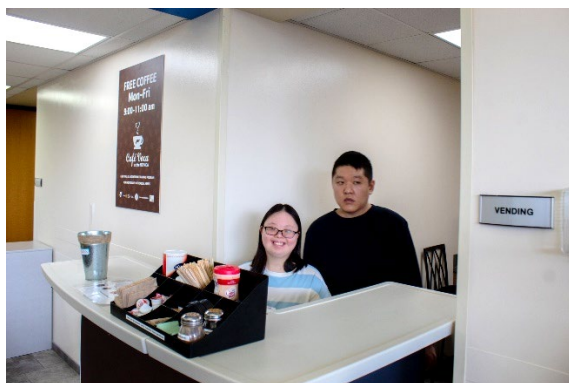
One trainee, Alexis, was recently interviewed by a local business, and offered a job. Cynthia Ramos, Alexis’ mother said, “This training program has taught my daughter responsibility, patience, and team work. Cafe Voca gave Alexis many new employable skills for her to work future jobs.”

Café Voca was developed in partnership with the Rotary Club of Chicagoland Korean-Northbrook (RCCKN) through a global grant from Rotary International, and partnerships with Autism Workforce, Healthy Choice Vending, and the Wheat Mission, a community organization that provides recreation to individuals with special needs in the Korean Community. The hands-on training is provided by Autism Workforce, the employment training arm of the Exercise Connection. Grants and community donations will sustain the program for the future.

For more information about the Café Voca program, contact North Suburban YMCA Special Services Coordinator Ellen Mirochnick at emirochnick@nsymca.org or (847) 272-7250 Ext. 1239.

About the [North Suburban YMCA](#)

The North Suburban YMCA services Northbrook and 14 surrounding communities with programs and tools that help its residents become healthier, more connected, and confident, ensuring that everyone, regardless of age, income, or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. The NSYMCA focuses on Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility and is a charitable organization, inclusive and welcoming to all in our community. Learn more at NSYMCA.org.



Café Voca inside the NSYMCA lobby, offers new job training opportunities to individuals with disabilities