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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Suburban YMCA Celebrates 20 Years of Community Strong at Annual Fundraising Event

Northbrook, Ill. – May 2026 – With more than 275 in attendance, the North Suburban YMCA hosted its 20th Annual Community Strong Fundraising Concert on April 23 at StudioOne in Highland Park. This year's event marked a major milestone, celebrating two decades of Community Strong while honoring the many individuals and businesses that have contributed to the fundraiser's long-standing success.

The reimagined event featured the organization's first live concert experience, headlined by Chicago-based band South of 80, performing "music through the decades." Guests embraced the concert theme by dressing in decade-inspired attire, adding to the event's festive and casual atmosphere.

The North Suburban YMCA's annual Community Strong fundraising campaign helps provide more than \$500,000 each year in financial assistance, ensuring life-changing programs and services remain accessible to individuals and families who need them most.

"These funds do far more than support programs — they create opportunity, belonging, and support for people throughout our community," says **Kim Nyren, Director of Community Investment and Events** for the **NSYMCA**. "This year's event felt especially unified. Everyone seemed connected, and our guests truly embraced the spirit of our 20th anniversary celebration. Most importantly, our supporters showed incredible generosity through direct donations and enthusiastic participation in our auction, games, and raffles."

This year's silent auction was the largest in the event's history and helped create an evening centered around generosity, connection, and community impact. Guests participated in fundraising favorites including the Golden Ticket Chocolate Bars, Getaway Ticket Raffle, and Paddle Frenzy hosted by Ron Bernardi of Sunset Foods.

"I love the creativity and entertainment at these events," said **Gina Gipperich, a Northbrook resident** and longtime supporter of the **YMCA**. "It's such a fun crowd, and every year I learn more about the incredible work the Y does for the community. Their impact extends far beyond Northbrook, and you can't help but catch the spirit of giving when you attend."

The evening also included a special tribute celebrating 20 years of the Ken and Alta Thiel Award for Social Responsibility and Leadership, recognizing past honorees and their lasting impact on the community.

Past Thiel Award recipients include Allstate, Ron Bernardi of Sunset Foods, the Northbrook Rotary Club, the Northbrook Woman's Club, First Bank of Highland Park, Ed Weimer of Wintrust, UPS, Paul Pryma, Ken and Alta Thiel, Northwestern University Football, Ashley Delaney of Whitehall, former YMCA CEO Howard Schultz, Hunger Resource Network, Waterway Carwash, the A.C. Buehler Foundation, Illinois Bone and Joint Institute, and Sal Manso and Reebie Storage & Moving Co.

"We were incredibly humbled to see more than half of our past Thiel Award recipients in attendance this year," said **Kathy Fielding, CEO of the NSYMCA**. "Without these amazing individuals and businesses who believe so strongly in giving back, our Y would not be able to serve the community in the ways we do each year," continues Fielding. "The event serves as a reminder that Community Strong is about more than fundraising—it is about neighbors showing up for one another and ensuring that children, families, seniors, and individuals of all abilities continue to have support, opportunity, hope, and a place to belong."

Proud event sponsors include [Allstate](#), [Illinois Bone & Joint](#), and [Wintrust Community Banks](#). Additional sponsors include [Brad Schneider for Congress](#), [Del Vasey State Farm](#), [FGK Services](#), [First Bank of Chicago](#), [Hill & Stone Insurance](#), [Horcher's Service, Inc.](#), [Huntington Bank](#), [Inspiro Tequila](#), [Janzen & Chwa Ortho](#), [Pulse Technology](#), Ruby's Massage, [Sunset Foods](#), [Stumm Insurance](#), [Tito's Handmade Vodka](#), [Tom Len Custom Homes](#), [UBS Financial Services](#), [Viso Graphic, Inc.](#), [Waterway Carwash](#), [WLS-FM](#), [Q101-FM radio](#), among many others. Specialty Sponsors include [Culver's Northbrook](#), [Gail's Brownies](#), [Giftsforyounow.com](#), [NorthShore Balloon Décor](#), [Nothing Bundt Cakes – Deerfield](#), [Rosati's Pizza](#) and more.

The other Community Strong event, the **6th Annual Golf Outing, will take place on July 16** at Chevy Chase Country Club. The outing will feature contests including "Beat the Pro," longest drive, chipping contest, and a "best-dressed" team competition. Last year's event welcomed more than 100 golfers, 25 volunteers and over 50 sponsors & vendors, and raised more than \$55,000 to support YMCA programs. To learn more about the NSYMCA's Community Strong efforts and the July 16 Golf Outing, contact Kim Nyren at knyren@nsymca.org.

For tickets to golf or Community Strong golf sponsorships, [CLICK HERE](#)

About the North Suburban YMCA

The North Suburban YMCA services Northbrook and 15 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 501(c)3 charitable organization, inclusive and welcoming to all in our community. Learn more at NSYMCA.org.



The North Suburban YMCA's 20th Community Strong Fundraising Concert hosted more than 270 guests and was held on April 23rd at StudioOne in Highland Park.



On April 23rd the NSYMCA hosted their 20th Fundraising Concert where Ron Bernardi of Sunset Foods hosts their annual Paddle Frenzy helping raise critical funds for financial assistance for over 2600 people in their 15 communities.



On April 23 the NSYMCA hosted their 20th Anniversary Fundraising Concert with a Decades Themed event featuring live music from South Of 80.



Johanna Benavides, resident of Deerfield and on the NSYMCA's Board of Directors, dressed in 80's rock attire with her husband and friends at NSYMCA's 20th Community Strong Fundraising Concert. (left) Brian & Johanna Benavides, Marnie & Matt Spiegel.



Anne O'Connor, NSYMCA President of the Board, and friends rocked the Decades theme with their 70's attire at the NSYMCA's 20th Community Strong Fundraising Concert.



Kathy Fielding, CEO of the NSYMCA, welcomes guests with the Y's impact videos of the night at the NSYMCA's 20th Community Strong Fundraising Concert.



Northbrook residents, (Top left) Jocelyn Garner, Lisa Rudisel, Chris Murphy, Kim Nyren, Gina Gipperich, Julie Gidaspow, (Bottom left) Richard Garner and Jon Gipperich, enjoy at night dancing at the NSYMCA's 20th Community Strong Fundraising Concert on April 23rd.



(Left to right) Jim Tuchler, NSYMCA's Board of Directors, Amy Tuchler, Arlene Peskin and Mitch Peskin, enjoy a night out at the NSYMCA's 20th Community Strong Fundraising Concert.



Weisner Perez from UBS Financial Services and a NSYMCA Board of Director enjoys a night out with fellow colleagues at the NSYMCA's 20th Community Strong Fundraising Concert on April 23 at StudioOne in Highland Park.



The North Suburban YMCA's 20th Community Strong Fundraising Concert on April 23rd, displayed their largest silent auction ever with over 266 packages.