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YMCA's 19th Annual Celebration of Prayer Features U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry C. Black

Strengthening the Spirit of Our Community during Holy Week

ORLANDO, FL – The YMCA of Central Florida today hosted **U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry C. Black** **who** shared an inspirational message of redemption, faith and unity during the Y's **19th Annual Celebration of Prayer Breakfast**.

Speaking during the event, attended by nearly 1,000 community leaders, Chaplain Black said that Holy Week is a fitting time to reflect upon "crosses we do not choose to bear." In weaving stories about his difficult childhood with humor, inspiration and powerful oration, Black said as a young man he was often bitter that his father had abandoned the family. But it was through his anger, as well as his mother's strong example of faith and acceptance, that eventually realized the spiritual lessons of adversity.

"Too often, we fail to recognize the role of providence in our lives – those times when the steps of good people are ordered by the Lord and we are given crosses that we did not choose to bear," Black said. "When that happens, embrace your cross. Do not face it with indifference because indifference hurts the heart of God more than nails. When you embrace a cross you did not choose, I promise that you will be transformed."

In his role as U.S. Senate Chaplain, Black leads the assembly's opening prayers and provides spiritual guidance to national leaders as they debate the challenging ethical issues of our day. He is also a former U.S. Navy Rear Admiral who served for 27 years before retiring as the Navy's Chief of Chaplains. In addition to holding numerous academic degrees, including Ph.Ds. in philosophy and ministry, Black is also author the acclaimed memoir, *From the Hood to the Hill*.

The YMCA's Celebration of Prayer, the largest local event of its kind held during Holy Week, celebrates the arrival of Easter, as well as the Y's Christian heritage, according to Jim Ferber, YMCA of Central Florida President and CEO.

"Celebration of Prayer brings people of all faiths and backgrounds together to pray for the youth, families and health of our community," Ferber said. "It's also a meaningful way to recognize the Y's Christian mission, which has guided our organization for over 150 years. We're extremely grateful to Chaplain Barry C. Black and all who attended today's event for joining us and supporting the Y's efforts to strengthen the foundation and spirit of our community."

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For more information about Celebration of Prayer or to learn more about the YMCA of Central Florida, visit www.ymcacentralflorida.com.

About the YMCA of Central Florida

The YMCA of Central Florida is one of the area's largest nonprofits committed to strengthening the local communities it serves. It is a diverse organization of men, women and children joined by a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility. Each day 25,000 Central Florida residents are impacted by the Y when a mentor inspires a child, individuals make healthy choices and a community comes together for common good. In 2012, this YMCA Association of over 1,800 employees across 6 Florida counties impacted over 225,000 residents and invested, during a down economy, \$10.2 million in its local communities through neighborhood improvement projects. Also, this Y provided \$9.2 million in financial assistance to children and families that resulted in lasting personal and social change.

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