



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Responders Across Six Counties and the YMCA of Central Florida Team Up to Improve Employee & Their Families' Well-Being

ORLANDO, Fla. – August 29, 2013 – On Labor Day, through 9/11, on the anniversary of the day when the term “First Responders” was etched in the minds of all Americans, first responder departments in Orange, Osceola, Brevard, Seminole, Lake and Marion counties will be joining forces with the YMCA of Central Florida to improve their employees’ mental, physical and family health through *Helping Heroes* initiative. Recognizing the impact of workplace stress and seeing its effect on first responders and their families, a press conference is scheduled for Tuesday, September 3, 10:30 – 11:00a.m. at the South Orlando YMCA Family Center. During the event, these officials and the YMCA will share how they plan to support the well-being of the regions 16,000+ first responder employees.

“First responders are driven to protect the public at all costs. And often, it’s at the expense of their own well-being and that of their families,” said Jim Ferber, President/CEO of the **YMCA of Central Florida**. “That is why the YMCA and **Dr. Phillips Charities** are committed to “*help our helpers*” by ensuring these men and women are in top mental and physical health. Even more importantly, we must ensure that their families have access to youth and family programs, healthy living resources, and places where they can relieve stress and connect with one another in off-duty time.”

Recent statistics show:

- The average life span of a law enforcement officer after retirement is only two to five years.
- Spouses of officers share higher stress levels and feel more isolated in having to maintain balance in their families’ lives.
- About 75% of First Responders have prehypertension or hypertension.
- Although burns and smoke inhalation are more associated with firefighters’ fatalities, heart disease including heart attack and stroke account for the largest number of line-of-duty fatalities each year.
- In 2012 heart attacks and other job related illnesses for law enforcement rose by 60% compared to the same period last year.

“The mental and physical health of our employees should not be sacrificed while they respond daily to our community’s needs,” said **Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings**. By joining together and launching the *Helping Heroes* initiative, we can beat the statistics and improve our employees’ quality of life so they can continue keeping our communities safe.”

Among the health risks for employees there are also job-related issues that affect their families as well. High rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide, emotional problems can be devastating to the families of law enforcement and first responders.

“As a community partner, the Y can help us with our goals to prevent potential consequences of our employees’ irregular schedules and stressful jobs,” said **Orlando Police Chief Paul Rooney**. We are committed to doing all we can do to support our employees and their families.”

“The easier we can make it for our employees and their families to address any physical and mental health issues before it affects their lives the better it is for everyone,” said **Chief James White, City of Winter Park Fire Chief and president of the Central Florida Fire Chiefs Association**. When we all come together again next year, I am confident we’ll be seeing happier and healthier employees.”

Join First Responders and Law Enforcement officials from the Orange, Osceola, Brevard, Seminole, Lake, and Marion counties along with the YMCA of Central Florida as they share details of the *Helping Heroes* initiative.

When: Tuesday, September 3, 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

What: Launch of *Helping Heroes Health* Initiative

Where: South Orlando YMCA Family Center
814 W Oak Ridge Rd, Orlando

Facts on Law Enforcement and First Responder Personal & Family Well-Being

The unusual job-related stresses impact First Responders’ home life and personal health:

- The National Institute of Justice interviewed officers who themselves report high rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide, emotional and health problems.
- The International Association of Chiefs of Police in July announced a Symposium on Officer Suicide because studies are showing that current work as a police officer was linked with an eight times increased risk of suicide.
- In 2013 heart attacks and other job related illnesses for law enforcement rose by 60% compared to the same period last year.
- Heart Attacks account for 45% of all work-related deaths for firefighters.

- The risk of having a heart attack doubles with each decade of law enforcement service.
- About 75% of First Responders have prehypertension or hypertension.
- Over 75% of First Responders are overweight or obese as a result of the interruption of normal dietary patterns and sleep that is associated with shift work.
- Heart disease accounts for 20-50% of all early retirements – and back problems account for another 15 – 35% with lack of physical activity as the major contributor to both conditions.
- The third leading cause of law enforcement deaths in 2013 was due to job related illnesses.

About the YMCA of Central Florida

The [YMCA of Central Florida](http://www.ymcacentralflorida.com) 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 an afterschool reading coach inspires a child, individuals make healthy choices at 27 locations and diverse communities come together for common good. In 2011, 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.

www.ymcacentralflorida.com

About Dr. Phillips Charities

Once the largest citrus producer in the world, Dr. Philip Phillips left a legacy that has spanned several generations culminating in the establishment of Dr. Phillips Charities, comprised of The Dr. P. Phillips Foundation and Dr. Phillips Inc.. These two distinct funding organizations are well known in Central Florida for their grant support to worthy capital projects and innovative programs of charities that address critical community needs, demonstrate the potential for ongoing community support, and have a significant, lasting impact on the community.

The Dr. Phillips name has been a major economic and philanthropic presence in the Central Florida community since the turn of the 20th century. Dr. Phillips Charities honors the legacy of the Phillips family and its support of organizations that live up to the motto "to help others help themselves." Dr. Phillips Charities' distributions average \$8 million annually. To date, over \$150 million in grants have been awarded by Dr. Phillips Charities. Today, 9 community buildings are named to honor the Phillips Family in Central Florida.

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