



YMCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

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PRESS RELEASE

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North Oakland Family YMCA puts kids in motion to combat childhood obesity

Auburn Hills, Mich. — Take a good look around your neighborhood after school. What do you hear and see? Buzzing bees and children? Odds are, the kids are not what you see. Today's youth spend more time engaged in sedentary activities like watching television and eating fast food than they do in physical activity. Sadly, this has led to an increase in youth obesity and Type II Diabetes, which is actually becoming an epidemic in the United States. So, what's the North Oakland Family YMCA doing about it? They are encouraging children to be active by providing a variety of youth-oriented programs that make exercise and fitness fun. They offer kid's yoga, a walking club and Isshinryu karate, to name a few.

The Isshinryu karate class is for youth age 6 to 13. Kids who take the class develop confidence, discipline and flexibility in a relaxed environment. They also improve hand-eye coordination and learn specific self-defense techniques. In karate, instructor Marlene Cowan uses specific drills targeted at muscle groups to improve strength and endurance. She notes, "A drill looks like fun, but we want the kids to know what they are developing. For example crab walking builds thighs and shoulders." A direct benefit of the exercise is that, "Some kids lose enough weight to adjust clothing size," according to Cowan.

While youth courses focus on fun and fitness, they also offer additional benefits for kids who enroll. Daniel and Ashley Brumeister, both age 12, participate in the karate class taught by Marlene Cowan. Ashley, a green belt, says her instructor is, "good at reaching out to children" and that Cowan mentors and nurtures them. Their mother has noticed an improvement in Ashley's self-confidence since starting karate and Ashley agrees. Daniel, a third-year student at purple belt level adds, "I've learned more self-control and definitely some more patience."

The YMCA also teaches leadership and communication skills, and works hard to instill core values among classmates. The YMCA uses colors to signify these core values. Red represents caring, yellow respect, blue is honesty and green signifies responsibility. Marlene uses the colors in karate class. She organizes teams around the colors with the more experienced children becoming team leaders mentoring the younger students. Children become confident, develop leadership and communication skills and have fun learning, all at the same time.

Mike Cantore teaches the Strong Kids in Training course at the North Oakland Family YMCA. In this class, kids participate in a variety of activities to build strength, cardio endurance and flexibility while having fun. According to Cantore, students spend time "running, playing games and participating in fitness tests." Though children aren't weighed, he notes,

“Some kids look a little peppier,” after taking the program. Drills and endurance building exercises are separated by an entertaining game to keep the focus on fun. Cantore offers these helpful tips to get kids into motion.

- Go for a family walk around the neighborhood or find a trail for a hiking trip
- Toss a baseball or football in the yard or play basketball
- Go for a bike ride
- Play games from childhood such as tag, or jump rope
- Go to your local pool and swim

For those wanting one-on-one instruction, the YMCA also offers personal training sessions with certified professionals. Cantore currently trains a 12 year-old boy and has tailored a workout program to the youth’s goals. He set up a program that includes running and using body weight to exercise core muscle groups. Personal training sessions focus on individual training needs and the approach taken depends on the student. One child might want to work on coordination and another might be preparing to run a marathon.

The North Oakland Family YMCA offers many classes aimed at putting kids in motion to combat childhood obesity and other illnesses that stem from inactivity. Like karate, each course is designed around fun, fitness and education. With so many to choose from, why sit on the sidelines? Check out their courses and enroll today!

The YMCA builds strong kids, strong families and strong communities. For more information contact Lisa Belotti, health and fitness director at the North Oakland Family YMCA at 248-370-9101 ext.235 or email ibelotti@ymcametrodetroit.org

North Oakland Family YMCA Youth Fitness Activities

Strong Kids in Training Ages 8-12

Build strong kids in this fitness class designed specifically for ages 8-12. Participants learn basic fitness skills with emphasis on cardiovascular, flexibility and body resistance exercises.

Kids Walking Club Ages 7-12

Get your walking shoes ready! Join a YMCA certified personal trainer and walk to better fitness. Learn how to get the most benefit from walking and have fun while you’re doing it!

Kids Play Ages 7-12

Play and have fun is the motto. Kids play a variety of games including soccer, kickball, and floor hockey along with other favorites. Have fun while getting fit!

Kids Time Yoga Ages 6-12

This program combines yoga and play, bringing out the child in all. Yoga, that is playful, creative and fun. Children can spend time being with other participants and time alone for mind/body work.

Family Fitness Ages 6 and up with parents

Bring the whole family and enjoy a class designed to get everyone in shape. Each week’s fitness activities include: soccer, parachute, aerobics and more.

Isshinryu Karate age 6-12

Learn self-discipline, increase self-confidence and develop balance and strength following the traditions of this ancient art.

Written by: Madeleine Miehs