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YMCA OF SOUTH FLORIDA BEACH BALL FUNDRAISER RAISES FUNDS FOR FREE SWIM LESSONS & RECOGNIZES SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS IN DROWNING PREVENTION

South Florida (September 29, 2018) – The YMCA of South Florida hosted its annual Beach Ball Gala Fundraiser on Saturday, September 29, 2018, at the InterContinental Miami Hotel. The event brought out the region's top business and community leaders to raise funds in support of the YMCA's water safety and drowning prevention initiatives.

"This fundraiser aims to save thousands of kids' lives by making them safer around water through YMCA swim lessons and water safety education programs" said Tongelia Milton, Executive Director of Communications at the YMCA. The event, themed "Light Up the Night," featured recognition of the Y's drowning prevention partners, music from DJ Irie and live music from the band "Heatwave." There was even a special message from Dr. Oz on the importance of learning to swim and being safe around the water. Fundraising opportunities included a Wine Wall and a Live Auction with extraordinary prizes like hotel stays, golf outings, flights, cruises, trips, sports, a chef experience, and much more, all to support the Y's efforts to keep children safe around water.

The event recognized YMCA community partners for their support of drowning prevention programs. "It is an honor and a privilege to present the LifeSaver Award to Elisabeth DeLuca, Jonathan DeLuca and The Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation for their amazing work in the community and their support of the YMCA," said Sheryl Woods, President and CEO of the YMCA of South Florida, as she presented the honorees with the LifeSaver Award. "Families like the DeLucas understand how critical it is to help teach our children to learn to swim and save countless young lives."

Florida leads the nation in drowning of children 18 years and younger with Broward and Miami-Dade counties leading the state. According to Dr. Oz, "About 10 people die from accidental drowning every day. One in 5 of these are children ages 14 and younger. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), for every child who dies of drowning, there are 5 more who are treated in emergency rooms for nonfatal water-related injuries that can result in brain damage and long-term disability."

The YMCA Beach Ball fundraiser helps provide free swim lessons to thousands of kids and adults who cannot afford it each year throughout South Florida. This year's event program stressed the need to ensure all kids know how to swim by putting a spotlight on YMCA Special Needs afterschool and other programs that include water safety and swim instruction. The YMCA runs a very large after school program for children in elementary, middle and high school – over 7,000 children per day in over 106 locations in South Florida. The YMCA is the largest provider of afterschool for children with special needs in Broward County, and is now expanding that program into Miami with the support of The Children's Trust.

Children with autism are especially drawn to water and according to the National Autism Association, drowning is the No. 1 cause of death for children with special needs. The YMCA of South Florida and its partners are leading the way in providing the critical life skills of water safety and drowning prevention to children and adults of all ages and abilities.

This year's YMCA Beach Ball was supported in part by Bacardi, BB&T, Delta Air Lines, Miami HEAT, Publix Super Markets Charities, and other local businesses, organizations and individuals. To learn more about the YMCA of South Florida or its drowning prevention initiatives, please visit www.ymcasouthflorida.org or call 954.334.9622.

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About the YMCA of South Florida

The Y is a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Every day, the Y works hard to build healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities through over 200 afterschool, preschool, special needs, sports, camp and youth programs, family centers, and senior health outreach sites. To learn more, visit www.ymcasouthflorida.org, connect on Facebook or Twitter, or call a Y near you.