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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Avenue Youth Center Partners with City of Columbus on Service Projects

Young people at Directions for Youth & Families' youth center at 657 South Ohio Avenue have partnered with *Keep Columbus Beautiful* to do monthly neighborhood service projects. Youth recently picked up trash and shoveled snow over the course of two days. Youth cleaned up litter on the street, sidewalks, yards and alley along Ohio Avenue between Mooberry and Livingston and then removed snow along the same stretch of sidewalk.

The projects are part of the Ohio Avenue Center's Artistic Leaders Promoting Success (ALPS) program. ALPS engages youth ages 11-17 in group activities that develop leadership, decision-making, communication, and problem resolution skills; encourages abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; and enhances understanding of and respect for diversity and cultural differences. Activities include a group-facilitated curriculum with interactive discussions and various visual and performing arts; planning and implementing community service projects with input from neighborhood organizations; and a two-day Youth Leadership Workshop and Conference held in collaboration with The Ohio State University's Office of Minority Affairs.

Steve Votaw, CEO of Directions for Youth & Families, indicated, "Since we opened the Ohio Avenue Center last November, young people have truly enjoyed the creative and performing arts programs, service projects, homework assistance and other after-school activities. We have been especially pleased to receive comments from community residents, including:

"You being here has added life back to the community."

"It feels good to have someplace to look forward to coming after school."

"I'm so happy the girls have a safe place to go after school," from a mother of daughters ages 12, 13, and 15.

*" I'm glad to see that you're offering more than basketball and that the kids have other activities and opportunities to be exposed to, " from a father.
" I didn't know Directions for Youth & Families could offer so much help for my family. The entire community is happy that you guys are here," from a parent."*

Directions for Youth & Families serves nearly 6,900 youth and families every year through community-based services which include counseling and behavioral health, prevention and education, programs for strengthening families, and a charter public school for middle-school age children. Directions for Youth & Families is funded in part by United Way of Central Ohio, ADAMH Board of Franklin County, the City of Columbus; is an FCCS Purchase of Service Affiliate; and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services.

Keep Columbus Beautiful is a community improvement program of the City of Columbus, Public Service Department, Refuse Collection Division. Established in 1983, the program has earned numerous local, regional, and national awards for beautification and community improvement efforts through government-run programs. The City of Columbus provided supplies and tools for the project.

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