



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Parma senior center wins award for YMCA partnership

PARMA, Ohio - The Donna Smallwood Activities Center and Parma Office on Aging was awarded the 2016 Independent Living Award for Excellence in Business Practices as chosen by the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging. Center Director Jo Ann Mason accepted the award Tuesday, along with Brandon Bussey, executive director of the North Royalton/Ridgewood YMCA.

The award recognizes the partnership between the Smallwood Center and the former Ridgewood YMCA. The YMCA made the decision to close Parma's local facility, and to address the void for the senior population, the YMCA and the City of Parma formed a partnership to bring the YMCA programs to the Smallwood Center. A wellness center with a variety of weight machines, treadmills, and stationary bicycles was added, and Silver Sneakers and other classes were added to Center activities. YMCA staff members and teachers were relocated to the Smallwood Center, saving the city money previously paid for classes and teachers.

Since November, the Smallwood Center has gained more than 200 new members. The YMCA has seen an increase in its membership as well, because center members must join the YMCA – at special pricing established by the YMCA - to use the exercise facilities.

Mayor Tim DeGeeter said: "Our city's motto is 'Progress Through Partnerships' and this is a perfect example of how that works – we have upgraded our senior center facilities, brought in new classes and teachers and that has resulted in new members. Additionally, this has helped us reduce city expenses. I congratulate center director Jo Ann Mason and her staff for all the fine work going on at the Smallwood Activities Center."

Mason added, “This partnership has been a win-win-win for all - the center, the YMCA, but more importantly, our older adults. We are so happy to be able to serve more of them through this cooperative design.”

Dr. Douglas Beach, the CEO of the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging, said in his award letter: “The Donna Smallwood Activities Center ... truly demonstrated the intent of the WRAAA Independent living Award for Excellence in Business Practices. This award ... identifies individuals and organizations that set standards and demonstrate dedication to creating communities that advance independent living. These communities are created by the work of individuals and organizations that are exceptional in helping older adults and individuals with disabilities maintain their independence through service provision, business practices, advocacy, volunteerism and leadership.”