



A Wellness & Recreation Program Tailored  
to the Needs of Citizens with Disabilities.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Answering the Call to Bring Fitness Options to Citizens with Disabilities in our Community.

The merits of exercise - from preventing chronic health conditions to boosting confidence and self-esteem - are hard to ignore. And these benefits are there for the taking, regardless of age, gender or physical ability. Yet there is a segment of our community, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), that too often face enormous obstacles in accessing the kind of basic recreation and wellness programs that many of us take for granted.

All too often these individuals are encouraged to only enjoy sedentary leisure, the most common being watching television or listening to the radio with family and friends. As a consequence, their leisure patterns do not help them maintain their health and fitness levels. This scenario is exacerbated by limited, coordinated community preventative health care, thereby resulting in secondary health conditions such as high blood pressure and cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, arthritis and respiratory diseases.

In 2005, the Surgeon General issued a Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities, recognizing the link between health and quality of life. This Call to Action encourages health care service providers, community leaders, advocates, and the public to work together to address the challenges facing people with disabilities in accessing health care and wellness services so that all people can live long, healthy, productive lives.

Answering the Call to Action, REM Ohio, a human services provider for people with I/DD, developed the vision for a wellness and recreation program called, *Ready, Fit & Able*. Recognizing the need for community partners to help promote and support this community health vision, REM Ohio enlisted the help of the County of Summit Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (Summit MRDD) and the Akron Area YMCA. Both Summit MRDD and the YMCA shared REM Ohio's desire to bring greater attention to this issue, while helping citizens of all abilities in our community improve their level of fitness and overall health.

*Ready, Fit & Able* will officially launch Saturday, March 14, with a morning (9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.) and afternoon (1:00 - 3:00 p.m.) session at the Lake Anna YMCA Community Center, located at 500 W. Hopocan Ave., Barberton, Ohio. Upon arrival, everyone will be invited to enjoy a variety of interactive activities supported by trained YMCA staff. The program has been designed as a fun way for citizens with disabilities to stay in shape and increase social interaction.

“As with any new program, we are excited to see how we can continue to improve fitness options for individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” said Carla Parker, state director, REM Ohio. “It is our intention to introduce the *Ready, Fit & Able* program in other areas of the state where we have a presence, as well as hold quarterly fitness outings. With the help of community partners like CSBMR/DD and YMCA, we believe that this program has the potential for improving the quality of life for citizens of all abilities.”

## About REM Ohio

REM Ohio provides an array of high-quality services for adults with developmental disabilities and other challenges throughout the state, with a state headquarters located in Akron, Ohio and additional locations in Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. The company currently employs over 900 full and part time employees. The individuals and families supported by REM Ohio have a variety of needs, all of which are met within the communities where they live, work and play. Because each person's needs and preferences are different - and often change over time - REM Ohio offers a range of community-based residential and non-residential programs and supports.

REM Ohio is a partner of The MENTOR Network, an organization dedicated to providing high-quality community based services to adults and children of all abilities. Founded in 1980, The MENTOR Network has evolved from a single residential program to a national network of local human services providers, offering an array of services to adults and children with developmental disabilities, acquired brain injuries or other catastrophic injuries and illnesses; youth with emotional, behavioral and medically complex challenges; and elders in need of home care.

## About County of Summit Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

The County of Summit Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (Summit MRDD) provides services to more than 3,900 individuals with disabilities and their families in Summit County. It is the organization's mission to be a primary community force that enables eligible individuals to work, live, learn, play and participate as equal citizens in their communities. Services are offered to people with disabilities in Summit County from the time an infant is diagnosed with a developmental disability, or before age 22 if an incident should occur that results in a disability. More information regarding the agency is available online at [www.summitmrdd.org](http://www.summitmrdd.org).

## About Akron Area YMCA

The Akron Area YMCA provides opportunities for families to strengthen their spirit, mind and body through hundreds of programs, services and volunteer opportunities. YMCAs are for people of all faiths, races, ages, incomes and abilities and are the nation's largest community service organization and charity of choice. Their Partners With Youth Annual Giving Campaign makes scholarship and financial assistance available to ensure no one is turned away from the Akron Area YMCA.

The Akron Area YMCA serves the community with seven full-time Early Care and Education Centers, more than 30 before and after school sites, six membership branches, and the Phoenix alternative learning school in Medina and East Akron. They also provide Northeast Ohio with premiere camping year-round at Camp Y-Noah and operate Rotary Camp for Children with Special Needs.

## About Rotary Camp for Children with Special Needs

The Rotary Camp for Children with Special Needs, in cooperation with the Akron Area YMCA, offers children and adults with disabilities the opportunity to experience the excitement of camp. Rotary Camp is American Camping Association (ACA) accredited and provides a nurturing and enriching atmosphere where campers develop relationships, skills and memories that will last a lifetime. With Summer Day Camps, Overnight Camp, Sibling Camp, Adult Camp and Respite Weekends, Rotary Camp provides children and adults with special needs a place to spend their summers - a place where disabilities and limits do not hold them back.