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SATORI FOUNDATION, YMCA PARTNER TO PROVIDE SWIMMING AND SAILING LESSONS TO TEENS IN FOSTER CARE

Teens living in two Lakeview Center foster care group homes now have an opportunity to take swimming and sailing lessons thanks to a partnership with the YMCA of Northwest Florida and the Pensacola Yacht Club Satori Foundation.

A grant from the Satori Foundation is funding swim lessons at the Y for teens at Lakeview Center's Arcadia Place and Cabot Heights, which serve teens in the foster care system who have experienced abuse or neglect and are struggling with mental health issues.

"This exciting partnership provides an opportunity that these teens wouldn't otherwise be exposed to," said Allison Hill, CEO of LifeView Group, Lakeview's parent company.

"We try to expose these young people to different opportunities – giving them a snapshot of what could be," said Donza Stanley, the Behavioral Health Manager at Arcadia. Learning to swim is the first step for the teens to earn the opportunity for a weeklong sailing camp with Satori. Beyond that, the Y is incentivizing the teens' participation by offering lifeguard training and the pathway to a job on the Y's aquatics team.

This first class is being led by veteran YMCA swim instructor Donna Steffensmeier. "I've enjoyed getting to know these wonderful teenagers, and I've seen them build their endurance in the water," she said. "I feel that this program can help develop useful skills and provide the opportunity to learn prerequisites for what will hopefully move towards lifeguarding class."

According to Alan McMillan, president of the Satori Foundation, the group has taken about 1,000 youth out on the water since its inception in 2015, using sailing to explore STEM, marine biology and more. But to go through the weeklong sailing camp, a participant must be able to swim. "What we learned quickly is that kids wanted to do it, but they couldn't swim," he explained. "We started seeing swimming as a core part of our mission. Now we look forward to working together with the Y for years to come."

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At Arcadia Place and Cabot Heights, specialized caregivers work to support the teens' recovery, health and well-being, preparing them for living in a family setting or in an independent environment. Some teens stay in the homes longer than two years before aging out of the foster care system. The partners hope this program will build on teens' self-esteem and impart important safety information for living in a region with many water-based activities. In addition to lessons, swimsuits also will be provided to teens who can't afford them.

"When we're looking at partnerships, we want to be a convener," said Michael Bodenhausen, YMCA CEO. "It takes multiple organizations working together to make the community better."

Photo captions:

- Alan McMillan, president of the Satori Foundation, with Allison Hill, CEO of Lakeview Center parent company LifeView Group, and Michael Bodenhausen, CEO of the YMCA of Northwest Florida
- A grant from the Satori Foundation grant is funding swim lessons at the YMCA of Northwest Florida for teens at Lakeview Center's Arcadia Place and Cabot Heights, which serve teens in the foster care system who have experienced abuse or neglect and are struggling with mental health issues.
- YMCA swim instructor Donna Steffensmeier teaches Lakeview Center foster care teen(s)
- Teen girl from Lakeview Center's foster care group home enjoys the water slide after YMCA swim lessons.

About Lakeview Center

Lakeview Center provides comprehensive behavioral health care to adults and children with mental illnesses, drug and alcohol dependencies and intellectual disabilities. Across Northwest Florida, our services range from residential treatment to outpatient counseling, psychiatry, trauma care, treatments for substance misuse and 24/7 support for those with serious mental illnesses. Learn more at eLakeviewCenter.org.

About the YMCA of Northwest Florida

The YMCA of Northwest Florida delivers programs for youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility through its four locations: the Bear Levin Studer Family YMCA, the Northeast YMCA, the Betty J. Pullum Family YMCA, and the Community YMCA at Gulf Breeze. Each year, the local Y reaches about 18,000 people locally and has a mission impact of more than \$500,000 in the two-county area. A leader in aquatics for more than a century, the Y teaches hundreds of children to swim each year so they can safely enjoy the beauty of our coastal community. Learn more at ymcanwfl.org.

About the Satori Foundation

The purpose of The PYC Satori Foundation is to inspire interest in and encourage and promote the sport of sailing and yachting and a broad range of maritime activities. The foundation is established to develop educational and training programs for the sports of sailing and yachting, for seamanship and for marine education. The Foundation will receive, maintain, use and apply funds and assets exclusively for charitable, scientific, literary or educational purposes. Learn more at satorifoundation.com.

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