



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 9, 2010

CONTACT: Andrea Voorhees, MeritCare (701) 234-2000 or (800) 437-4010, page 1715  
Kristan Bullinger, YMCA, (701) 364-4127

### **Sanford Health-MeritCare and YMCA Partner to Improve Health and Fitness**

FARGO, N.D. - Sanford Health-MeritCare and the YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties are announcing a unique partnership to expand health and fitness in rapidly growing southwest Fargo. A new 78,000 square foot comprehensive fitness and wellness center will be built in the Urban Plains Development. The facility will be located at 5225 31<sup>st</sup> Ave. S., Fargo. The facility will cost \$12 million and is an equal 50/50 partnership. It will employ 25-30 people and is projected to serve 3,500 members.

"Fitness is clearly a key component of helping people stay healthy. By partnering with the YMCA, we are proud to be able to work together to inspire people to improve their quality of life. This will be one of the premier facilities of its kind in the region and serves the entire greater Fargo-Moorhead area," said Dennis Millirons, president, MeritCare Medical Center.

"It's all about partnership and doing what's best for the community," said Paul Finstad, CEO of the YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties. "I believe together with Sanford Health-MeritCare, the YMCA can build a facility focused on providing services for families and individuals who are seeking a healthier, more active lifestyle. Partnering with Sanford Health-MeritCare will also help the YMCA fulfill our mission of enhancing the spirit, mind and body of all persons in our community."

Zerr Berg Architects, Fargo, is the firm designing the facility. A groundbreaking will be held later this summer. The facility is expected to open in the fall of 2011. This is an especially good fit as plans for the neighborhood call for an active lifestyle community. Including 25-acre public park which will include a half-mile body of water, a boardwalk, sculpture, amphitheater, open green space for activity and over five miles of bike paths.

#### **Background:**

- An independent feasibility study conducted in the summer of 2006 found that a new comprehensive recreational facility would generate 3,316-4,437 new memberships. A four-community (West Fargo, Fargo, Moorhead, Dilworth) metro study of community wellness needs conducted in 2005 recommended indoor fitness and exercise, as well as aquatic facilities. Based on the survey data, the facility should be located in the high-growth area south of Interstate 94 and west of Interstate 29.
- Both nonprofits had been looking to build a center in southwest Fargo, the power of two nonprofits pooling their money has created a facility that can provide more diverse services to more people at one time. The opportunity to work together is a very unique experience. It's good for Fargo to see that two different businesses can come with different missions and work for the betterment of the community.
- When Sanford Health & MeritCare merged, a commitment was made to bring growth opportunities to the greater Fargo region. This is the first of many expected examples.
- The partnership will provide more fitness opportunities for individuals and families. It enables both organizations to expand their core belief in the value of health, wellness and fitness as part of building the complete individual.
- Of 2,686 YMCAs nationwide 1,148 are collaborations with hospitals. Many health care organizations across the country have successfully partnered with local YMCA's. Sanford Health has existing partnerships with YMCA's in Sioux Falls, S.D. and Worthington, Minn.

- Members will have the ease-of-mind knowing they have the backing of a high level of medical expertise including direct access to physical therapists, exercise specialists, doctors, and others.
- MeritCare has housed fitness centers open to the public for over 20 years. MeritCare will be closing and moving from its current 17,000 sq foot fitness center at MeritCare Southpointe, 2400 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Fargo. Moving will allow us to expand much needed space for orthopedic doctors to see patients at MeritCare Southpointe.
- Because this is an equal partnership, the new facility will be an independent non-profit organization. Memberships will be available to all community members. We are also working on a plan to grant limited access for existing YMCA members.
- Amenities include: Recreation pool, racquetball and basketball courts, cycling room, running/walking track (nine laps per mile), professionally-certified trainers, cardiovascular equipment, group exercise space, community education room, massage and weights.
- Short-term child care will be available while people are using the facility.
- Sanford Health currently has partnerships with YMCA's in Sioux Falls, S.D., and Worthington, Minn. These partnerships have great synergy and help to promote a healthy community.
- Sanford Health-MeritCare has an ongoing contract with the Fargo Force to provide sports medicine services and our relationship with the Urban Plains Center has been very positive.
- The YMCA and Sanford-MeritCare are very excited and proud to be part of a great neighborhood very focused on wellness. There are plans in place to develop the surrounding area with a 25-acre public park which will include a half-mile body of water, a boardwalk, sculpture, amphitheater, open green space for activity and over five miles of bike paths. This facility will help to supplement that effort.

###

### **Information for the Media**

A press conference will be held at the Urban Plains Center, 5225 31<sup>st</sup> Ave. S., Fargo at 9:30 a.m. Directions: (to avoid the construction zone on 45<sup>th</sup> St.) Take the Veterans Blvd exit of I-94 south to 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave.

Spokespeople:

Dennis Millirons, president, MeritCare Medical Center

Paul Finstad, CEO, YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties

Exterior architects renderings of the new facility – [Download Image](#).

Map showing new location in the Urban Plain Development – [Download Image](#).