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## YMCA Buffalo Niagara to Break Ground on New Independent Health Family Branch YMCA

(Amherst, NY) – YMCA Buffalo Niagara will be officially breaking ground on its 94,000-square-foot state-of-the-art family branch today, Monday December 12, 2011 at 11:00 am. The new facility located at 150 Tech Drive in Amherst will be called the Independent Health Family Branch YMCA after the Amherst-based health insurance company.

The new Y will be located adjacent to the North Campus of Erie Community College (ECC) and will replace the existing 26,000 square-foot Northeast Family YMCA branch on Main Street in Snyder. This facility will be transferred to Daemen College when the YMCA opens.

“The breaking of ground for this new facility is one of the high points in the 160-year history of the Buffalo Niagara YMCA and will be a transforming event for the residents of the eastern and northern suburbs of our community who, a year from now, will be treated to one of the finest Y branches in the entire country,” said William M. Collins, chairman of the YMCA Board of Trustees.

According to Michael W. Cropp, M.D., president and CEO of Independent Health, the health plan’s \$2 million financial commitment – which gives it naming rights in perpetuity – represents a significant investment in the YMCA and a true partnership between the two not-for-profit organizations.

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"This partnership and investment in the new Independent Health Family Branch YMCA allows Independent Health the opportunity to establish an integrated medical fitness model that will engage our members and the entire community in health promotion and wellness activities with the ultimate goal of managing and preventing chronic conditions, thus lowering the medical cost trend," said Dr. Cropp.

Research shows inactivity, excess weight, and obesity are responsible for 27 percent of national health care costs, added Dr. Cropp

Bammel Architects was retained to design the new facility and Savarino Construction Services will be the construction manager. The total cost of the new YMCA, including land acquisition, site approvals, design, construction, and equipment is estimated at \$23 million. A capital fundraising effort to help fund the project was launched in August and has raised \$3.1 million dollars.

John Murray, president/CEO of YMCA Buffalo Niagara, said the new two-story branch will have features similar to the Southtowns Family Branch, including two 7,700-square-foot gymnasiums, an indoor running/jogging track, fitness center/weight room, two swimming pools (a zero entry warm water pool and a six-lane, 25-yard lap pool), aerobic studios, adventure room, child watch, multi-purpose rooms, locker rooms, and ample parking. It will also utilize energy-efficient, green technology. Updates on the progress of the building are available at [www.IndependentHealthFamilyYMCA.org](http://www.IndependentHealthFamilyYMCA.org).

The new Independent Health Family Branch YMCA will also include a comprehensive physical rehabilitation center and a teaching kitchen for nutritional education. "The addition of the health care and medical components will further strengthen the viability and success of the new facility while supporting the organization's ongoing efforts," said Collins.

"Our focus on health and wellness is reflected in the variety of programs we offer for all ages and abilities," said Collins. "Collaborations with innovative organizations such as Independent Health provide the opportunity for those wanting to take the first step toward a healthier lifestyle to do so at the YMCA."

Approximately one year prior to the opening of the new facility, current YMCA Northeast Family Branch members will be able to enroll for membership at the Independent Health Family Branch YMCA. Enrollment for the general public will begin about six months prior to the facility's opening.

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As part of the partnership, a joint steering team consisting of YMCA and Independent Health representatives has been established to develop programming across all YMCA Buffalo Niagara branches that will emphasize prevention versus treatment. The focus is on the development and measurement of activities designed to promote behavior (lifestyle) changes which improves health status and quality of life. Independent Health will also have an on-site presence at the Independent Health Family Branch YMCA.

“Our two organizations are developing programs that enhance fitness, foster prevention, and engage people in their health,” said Dr. Cropp. “Health care costs are closely tied to chronic diseases, which are rooted to a large extent in personal choices and behaviors. As two organizations who share a similar mission, the YMCA and Independent Health are committed to encouraging active lifestyles and improving the health and well-being of the community.”

Locally founded in 1852, YMCA Buffalo Niagara is an inclusive association of people committed to a common effort to help individuals and families reach their fullest potential in terms of spirit, mind, and body. The YMCA’s focus on health and wellness is reflected in the variety of programs that it offers for all ages and abilities.

A not-for-profit organization, YMCA Buffalo Niagara serves more than 100,000 people annually through the seven branches located throughout western New York, YMCA Camp Weona, as well as at more than 40 community-based program sites. This tremendous outreach would not be possible without the support of its volunteers. From summer sports programs and swimming lessons—there is something for everyone at the YMCA. For more information, visit [www.ymcabuffaloniagara.org](http://www.ymcabuffaloniagara.org).

Headquartered in Buffalo, Independent Health began operations in 1980 and has consistently been rated among the top health plans in the country for customer service and member satisfaction. Independent Health’s comprehensive portfolio of product and service offerings include HMO, POS, PPO and EPO products, Medicare and Medicaid plans, traditional indemnity insurance, consumer-directed plans, coverage for self-funded employers, plus health savings account (HSA) and pharmacy benefit management (PBM) services. Independent Health’s extensive provider networks include more than 846,000 physicians, 3,700 hospitals, and 53,000 pharmacies nationally. Combined, the company provides health benefits and services to nearly 375,000 individuals in Western New York and throughout the country. For more information, visit Independent Health’s website at [www.independenthealth.com](http://www.independenthealth.com).

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