



**For Release June 27, 2006**

**Dancel Family Gift Launches Y Capital Campaign  
\$750,000 Donated For Renovation and Expansion**

The Dancel Family Foundation of Columbia has pledged one of the single largest private contributions in county history to the Howard County YMCA for its \$11.2 million expansion and renovation project to begin in late summer, YMCA Executive Director Troy Weaver announced today.

Bernie Dancel, chairman and CEO of Ascend One Corp., a financial services company that helps consumers solve personal financial problems, has earmarked \$750,000 for the \$3 million capital campaign to modernize the 13<sup>th</sup> oldest YMCA charter in the country. The project, which the Y has been planning for 10 years, will more than double the facility's available space in Ellicott City, and calls for two gymnasiums where there was none, a second pool and a 30-foot-high climbing wall, among other amenities.

Barbara Lawson, president and CEO of The Columbia Foundation, Howard County's community foundation, put the contribution in perspective by calling it "an amazing and significant gift" and one that "deserves to be acknowledged and applauded, as do all huge acts of philanthropy."

The pledge from Dancel has also sparked a partnership between the Y and the Columbia Ravens youth sports organization, which Dancel helped to found in 2003. The two new gyms will be known as "The Home of the Columbia Ravens" basketball team, and the Ravens board will oversee the Y's basketball program. The Ravens also have football and cheerleading programs.

The annual cost of operating the gymnasiums for the youth basketball program will be paid by the Columbia Ravens. They will also actively participate in the Y's capital fundraising campaign.

"Our aim is to elevate youth basketball in the county through the YMCA," says Dancel, adding that this is the same goal the Ravens have for football and cheerleading. He praises Weaver's commitment in forming this partnership and his leadership in marshalling the project through all the proper channels.

The Howard County YMCA was founded in 1854, and has operated out of its current location on Montgomery Road for more than 40 years. Previous expansion plans fell by the wayside when earlier efforts to sell the Y's site met with opposition. Last year, the Y sold part of its land to the county for an elementary school.

"This is what we have long been waiting for," said Weaver, who has been with the Howard County Y for seven years. "It is turning out better than we could have hoped."



Construction is currently underway for the school, which will share its fields and parking with the YMCA. Plans for adjacent property call for housing for seniors, another of the Y's targeted populations, Weaver added.

“We couldn't be in a better position than we now are to finally have this project come to fruition,” he continued. “Bernie Dancel's generosity and the Columbia Ravens' philosophy is one of the reasons for that. Like the Y, Bernie is passionate about reaching out to youth through sports and fitness. It makes perfect sense for us to work together.”

Dancel said he is “excited for the Ravens to be associated with the Y,” and to continue his foundation's support of worthy community causes. Last year Dancel's Family Foundation contributed \$100,000 to the county's \$1 million stadium lighting fund drive, which changed the face of football by introducing night games at all high schools.

YMCA expansion plans call for a state-of-the-art cycling center, a fitness assessment lab, expanded wellness and child care centers, a teen/senior center, more locker rooms and two community meeting rooms. The original pool will be renovated, and the second will be a warm water pool dedicated to the youngest and oldest users for activities ranging from first swimming lessons to movement exercises for arthritis sufferers. Groundbreaking for the expansion and renovation of the existing building is slated for late August.

“I believe we have tried to think of everything that a dynamic community such as this one would be interested in,” Weaver said, adding that this makeover should spread the Y's reach to 5-6 miles. This depth will allow the agency to double its membership to 15,000 and to serve 21,000 people. Scholarship money for those in need will double as well.

The Y's sale of eight of its 12.5 acres to the county toward the 20 acres needed for its school site netted \$2 million, and the state kicked in \$1.5 million in funding. The Y hopes to raise \$3 million from a community campaign and borrow the rest of the \$11.2 million needed for the project.

For more information or to donate to the YMCA's capital campaign, call the Y at 410-465-4334 or visit [ymcamd.org](http://ymcamd.org).

**Media Contact:**

Troy Weaver  
Howard County Family YMCA  
410.465.7956 ext. 227  
[TroyWeaver@ymcamd.org](mailto:TroyWeaver@ymcamd.org)