



## Media Release

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### Honoring Community and Business Leaders at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual “In the Company of Women” Benefit Luncheon

**May 31, 2011** (*White Plains, NY*): The ballroom at the Rye Town Hilton was filled with almost 550 women and men. They joined the YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester on May 6<sup>th</sup> in recognizing the 2011 “In the Company of Women Honorees” and supporting the mission of the YWCA – to eliminate racism and empower women.

Deputy County Executive Kevin J. Plunkett presented the Leader of Distinction award to **William M. Mooney, Jr.**, the President of The Westchester County Association. In his remarks, Mr. Plunkett noted that throughout his entire career, Bill Mooney has worked to make Westchester County a better place for women, girls and families.

With twinkles in their eyes, the Klaff sisters, **Mollie Klaff Passero** and **Debbie Klaff Katz**, owners of Klaff’s Luxury Home and Design Store, stepped up to the podium to receive the Women in Business Award. These stalwart sisters have led the family business for over fifty years, fostering an atmosphere where women are supported and encouraged to succeed in the workplace, and that one should always give back to the community.

The final honoree of the afternoon, the Community Champion **Karen V. Hill**, has a long history as an advocate, supporter and leader in housing and community development. Ms. Hill is the President and CEO of the Harriet Tubman Home, leading the efforts to designate the property a national historic landmark.

“In the Company of Women” was launched three years ago to help the YWCA bring its story to the greater Westchester community and to showcase the work the agency does each day to eliminate racism and empower women. One of the most memorable moments of the 2011 benefit luncheon was hearing from a former YWCA resident. The story of her journey kept the audience captivated in awe of her courage. The courage to leave her family and small child behind to enter a year-long substance abuse program at the YWCA Residence after being incarcerated. The courage to say no more to her addiction; to turn her life around; to go back and complete her college degree. Today, three years after leaving the Residence, she is on her way towards securing her Masters Degree. Her young daughter attends programs and summer camp at the YWCA.

The final part of the event program was the keynote speaker **Tonya Lewis Lee**. Her powerful message of diversity and advocacy made for a memorable afternoon. Audience members were inspired by her personal journey as a dedicated working professional, advocate, and mom.

Ms. Lee has served as the national spokesperson for **A Healthy Baby Begins with You** campaign initiated by the United States Department of Health & Human Services Office of Minority Health for the past three years and is dedicated to raising awareness of infant and maternal health. Outspoken on the issues of women and race, she has written for magazines such as *Avenue*, *Gotham*, *O*; contributed two campaign trail interviews with Michelle Obama to *Glamour* magazine; and has appeared on Good Morning America and CNN. The YWCA was pleased to host her as the keynote presenter at the 2011 “In the Company of Women” benefit luncheon.

### **YWCA Background**

For over 80 years, the YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester has been a pioneer for social change through innovative programs that improve the lives of women, children and families. The not-for-profit’s mission is to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. Each week the YWCA serves over 4,000 diverse women, children and families through early education and after-school programs; summer camps; swim school and team; gymnastics classes and team; health and wellness activities; programs for people with developmental disabilities; a Residence for low income women; the Children’s Center at the County Courthouse; Supervised Visitation program and other activities that further the mission. Members range in age from infants to senior citizens and come from across the greater Westchester Community.

### **“In the Company of Women” Event Background**

A woman's biggest inspiration often comes from another woman in her life -- her mother, sister, friend or peer. At “In the Company of Women,” attendees have the opportunity to meet other important women who make a difference in Westchester County, gain insight and inspiration from the keynote speaker, and most importantly, to help fulfill the YWCA’s mission of empowering women and eliminating racism through their involvement and personal generosity. The Co-Chairs for 2011 were Karen V. Hill, President of The Harriet Tubman Home and Patricia Mulqueen, Manager Westchester Public Affairs at Con Edison.

“In the Company of Women” is a year-long project of the YWCA with networking opportunities and information sessions held throughout the year. To learn how to get involved, contact the YWCA Events Office at 914-949-6227 x147 or email [events@ywcawpcw.org](mailto:events@ywcawpcw.org).

Attached Photo features (from left to right) William Mooney III, Patricia Mulqueen, Maria L. Imperial, Tonya Lewis Lee, William M. Mooney, Jr.

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