



## **GoLightly Enables Cincinnati YMCA to Engage Easy and Quickly With Afterschool Community Partners**

### **About YMCA of Greater Cincinnati**

In 2006, the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati celebrated its 153rd year of service to the community. It is the area's largest not-for-profit community service organization, serving 43,000 kids, 52,000 families, and 14,000 teens through a broad range of programs, including mentoring, youth leadership and volunteerism through community outreach initiatives. The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati is also the Tri-state's largest provider of childcare and afterschool care, serving people of all faiths, races, ages and incomes.

### **The Challenge**

Beginning in September 2005, Cincinnati Public Schools and the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati invested \$1.7 million to expand the CincyAfterSchool Network from nine afterschool sites to 22, with two new staff positions, and several new programmatic initiatives at each site. The YMCA's challenge was to coordinate the expansion and enhancement of the afterschool program.

The afterschool program relies on collaboration among a large number of local agencies, some of which are 45 miles apart from each other. YMCA staff interviewed people at each site to find out how to improve collaboration, and the top issue was communication. Their ongoing challenge was to make sure that everyone in the program knows what else is going on, and that everyone has access to documents to fully participate in the program.

This required a state-of-the-art communications and information network to keep in touch with each afterschool site, coordinate the distribution of documents and forms, and offer a means for site administrators to work collaboratively.

### **The GoLightly Solution**

**A powerful communications and information-sharing tool:** The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati turned to GoLightly to help manage their CincyAfterSchool Network that they administer for the Cincinnati Public School system. They use GoLightly to communicate with partner agencies that are involved in the program, which are all locally run and are located all across the county. GoLightly functions as an "intranet" for staff, volunteers, and community partners. It provides a way for everyone involved in the program to stay in contact with each other, share documents and images, and have a "place" where they can congregate. Open or closed workgroups are available so that the right people are plugged into the right conversations. A blog and newsletter are published regularly so that participating local agencies can stay informed about the program.

**A place to share documents:** The most used section of the YMCA's GoLightly tool is the Documents Library, which is the best place to find all the needed enrollment forms for afterschool participants. Rebecca Kelley, Executive Director of Community Services for the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati, is the person responsible for overseeing the GoLightly tool. She likes that anyone can upload files into the Documents Library whenever they need to, including



when on the road. Afterschool site administrators can have access to these documents immediately, which has enabled the network to “move at the speed of light,” according to Kelley.

**A place to build community:** When a new community partner agency joins the afterschool program, they access the YMCA’s GoLightly tool not just to find documents and forms, but also to interact easily with other program administrators via the online discussion groups and member directory. “The Welcome Page helps us build community and create a shared vision,” says Rebecca Kelley.

**A way to stay in touch with everyone:** During the launch of the afterschool program in Fall 2005, the YMCA sent several email blasts to everyone involved, inviting them to the YMCA’s GoLightly site. Several months after their launch, over 160 people have activated their account and are using the GoLightly tool on a regular basis. Rebecca Kelley, who is responsible for the GoLightly implementation, has personally trained 25% of those people to use the site. “The success of any collaboration is the openness of information,” says Kelley. “People want to be included, and they want access to information at the same time as everyone else. It builds trust. Our GoLightly system makes people feel totally included.”

**A way to ensure transparency of information between Metro and branch YMCAs:** GoLightly enables better communication between branches and metro by creating a workspace for all staff, where people can post comments, and others can react to it. In addition, GoLightly allows the management of email discussion lists, which also ensures that everyone is kept in the loop. Program administrators and staff can search for keywords, and find conversations that have occurred in the past on topics of interest.

**In the words of top management:**

“I like to tell the story of one woman who is a partner in the After School program, who was not initially enthusiastic at all about the partnership or online tools. After working with her and doing some training, she has since told me how amazed she is at what we can do on the Web, and how fast we can communicate with each other. GoLightly has helped us cross the bridge to a better partnership with her and her local agency, and has improved our trust.”

*Rebecca Kelley, Executive Director of Community Services for the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati*

“I’m a huge GoLightly fan. It’s incredibly easy to use, it improves communication at all levels – in house, with volunteers, with community partner agencies – and lets us work more quickly and more efficiently. I like that it combines a number of online tools that we really need and use every day. And best of all you need very little technical knowledge to use it. Thanks, GoLightly.”

*Rebecca Kelley, Executive Director of Community Services for the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati*

**More About GoLightly**



GoLightly is a leading provider of online community software that helps community-based organizations engage with members and constituents online. GoLightly's web-based solutions include secure online community forums, searchable email lists, blogs, editable workspaces, and powerful membership management capabilities that allow communities to work together effectively and safely on the Web. GoLightly is based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Clients include the American Red Cross Bay Area, YMCA of Greater Cincinnati, La Leche League International, Nonprofit Technology Enterprise Network, Chip and Cookie Read Aloud Foundation, Threshold Foundation, GlobalGiving, Global Footprint Network, Chochmat HaLev, LatchOn.org, and National Alliance for Choice in Giving.

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