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Volunteering is no longer an 'option' in this economy

East Bay Y President, Robert Wilkins, calls for more volunteers to make up the gap in services with a "Work of Heart."

OAKLAND, CA – October 27, 2011 – Governments are strapped and it's time for people to take on more personal responsibility, says Robert Wilkins, President and CEO of the YMCA of the East Bay, one of the Bay Area's largest volunteer training organizations.

Last night at a dinner in Oakland, Wilkins told a large group of volunteers that money can only go so far. "We need," says Wilkins, "to provide something that, in the end, is even more valuable than money. It's our time. That is the only thing that can get our neighbors and the community through tough economic times."

Speaking at the Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition Dinner for the YMCA of the East Bay, Wilkins congratulated hundreds of volunteers for their contributions over the past year. "Volunteering even a small amount of time to help even one person is a 'work of heart' that will provide us all with personal fulfillment in addition to keeping our communities working and livable." While his non-profit organization has a major footprint throughout the East Bay, and trains and matches volunteers with thousands of important opportunities to serve, Wilkins made a point of telling the crowd to "look around. There are also many other organizations that can help channel our much-needed energy."

Wilkins also admitted that this is a critical time for service organizations.

"Volunteer-staffed programs have always been vital lifelines for youth and families throughout the East Bay. Not everyone has the means to be a donor, but everyone can make a difference by volunteering a small amount of their time."

More than 300 attended the annual dinner and heard a keynote speech by acclaimed Oakland sculptor, Mario Chiodo. Last month at a ceremony held in Uptown Oakland,



Chiodo unveiled 'Remember Them,' his highly anticipated tribute in bronze to 25 "champions for humanity" including Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and Rosa Parks. The sculpture, which sits within Fox Square Park, is cast in 60,000 pounds of bronze and stands three stories tall. It is believed to be one of the largest public sculptures in the United States.

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About the East Bay Y System:

The YMCA of the East Bay is one of the largest trainers and deployers of volunteers in the Bay Area and last year trained more than 500 volunteers in programs ranging from childcare to teen enrichment, health and wellness and cultural harmony. With nine branches and almost 50 childcare centers in operation from Fremont to the Oregon border, the YMCA of the East Bay also has the largest geographic reach of any YMCA in North America. Formed July 20, 1879, the YMCA of the East Bay is a 501 (c) (3) corporation operating branches in downtown Oakland, Fremont, Newark, Hayward, Castro Valley, Richmond, and Dublin, as well as camps in Livermore, Pescadero (San Mateo County) and Redway (Humboldt County).