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YMCA of Metropolitan Washington Celebrates the Renaming of 14th and W Streets to “Anthony Bowen Way”

WASHINGTON, (June 21, 2019)—On Friday, June 21, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington celebrated the renaming of 14th & W Streets to “Anthony Bowen Way.” Representatives, volunteers, and Y staff came together to witness Ward 1 Councilmember, Brianne K. Nadeau, unveil the new street sign in front of the nationally historic YMCA Anthony Bowen branch that is located at 1325 W Street, N.W.

Anthony Bowen was born into slavery in Prince George’s County, Maryland in 1809. He never let his adverse circumstances determine his future and, in 1830, he purchased his freedom for \$425. In 1853, Anthony Bowen organized the first Colored Men’s Christian Association, just two years after the YMCA was established in the United States. Respected in both white and black communities, he was well-known as the founder of St. Paul A.M.E. Church, council member of the District’s Seventh Ward, the first African American clerk at the U.S. Patent Office, and the founder and president of the world’s first African American YMCA.

“The YMCA Anthony Bowen represents the legacy of Bowen’s life-work and mission. His vision for a better world is realized in the ever-evolving historic Shaw/ U Street Community, and our neighbors who walk through its doors each day. ‘Anthony Bowen Way’ is the precipice of the journey that pays homage to the challenges and struggles that Bowen overcame, and the victories that he achieved. YMCA Anthony Bowen will continue to commemorate the history of Anthony Bowen, not only through the newly revitalized branch, but also with the naming of this street. Our hope is that when Washington, D.C. residents drive or walk down ‘Anthony Bowen Way,’ they will be proud of the city they call home,” said Angie Reese-Hawkins, president & CEO of YMCA of Metropolitan Washington. “I would also be remiss if I did not thank Councilmember Brianne Nadeau for her guidance and support during the re-naming process.”

As the first African American YMCA in the nation, the YMCA Anthony Bowen stands unyielding in the YMCA’s mission of inclusiveness, and its commitment to continue to provide the U Street/ Shaw community with vital programs that help support individuals and families. YMCA Anthony Bowen employs a large percentage of its staff from the surrounding U Street/ Shaw community, to help revitalize the neighborhood. This branch has an array of programs under one umbrella: childcare, summer camp, nutrition and culinary arts programs, as well as aquatics programs, wall climbing, aerial yoga, and so much more. It has been a venue for special events with the U.S. Department of State, press conferences with the Department of Health and Human Services, and a meeting site for local businesses.

“Anthony Bowen Way signifies the core beliefs of the YMCA Anthony Bowen, which are Youth Development, Social Responsibility, and Healthy Living,” said Leslie Zork, YMCA of Metropolitan Washington board co-chair, and a Washington, D.C. resident. “The Y is a place that is all-inclusive, provides an environment that uplifts, and is a safe place for our neighbors and members to gather. And as my colleagues mentioned in their testimonies, the new street sign pays homage to the history and culture of my beloved city,” said Zork.

“Our goal is to continue the legendary work of Anthony Bowen by serving the community, providing access to the underserved, and to unite us all for the common good,” said Reese-Hawkins.

Learn more about Anthony Bowen’s legacy at <https://www.ymcadc.org/locations/ymca-anthony-bowen/anthony-bowen-history/>.

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About YMCA of Metropolitan Washington

The YMCA of Metropolitan Washington is a non-profit charity organization that has been serving the communities and families of Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia in the areas of youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility for nearly 165 years. Through opportunities in wellness, aquatics, youth sports, summer camps, childcare and more, the Y engages more than 250,000 individuals and families. Visit www.ymcadc.org for more information.