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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS ACADEMY LAUNCHES IN MACON
TO IGNITE SPIRIT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH**

MACON – The Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce is excited to bring Georgia’s first Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) to Macon-Bibb County to encourage middle and high school students to become business owners as part of a weekly entrepreneur education class beginning this fall.

YEA! is a cutting-edge program that takes students ages 11 to 18 through the process of starting and launching a real business or social movement over the course of an academic year. By the end of the class, students own and operate fully-formed and functioning businesses, which may be carried on after their graduation from the program.

“The Young Entrepreneurs Academy will help the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce to fulfill its goal of supporting small business development in the area by training our future leaders and helping them to establish strong, lasting relationships with their hometown business community,” said Mike Dyer, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce President and CEO. “We are thrilled to be the next community in the nation to adopt the program, which will enhance business education for students and provide a unique, challenging and fulfilling experience for all participants.”

“Entrepreneurship and small businesses have been at the core of our revitalization for the past few years, and we welcome and encourage any chance to support more people following their dreams,” said Macon-Bibb County Mayor Robert Reichert. “The Young Entrepreneurs Academy will be a great opportunity for our students to get a head start on being successful and helping our city grow.”

During the 30-week commitment, students will brainstorm and form their business ideas, make pitches to investors for startup funding and launch their own businesses or social movements. Mentors and local entrepreneurs across a variety of industries, such as graphic design, web development, law, accounting, retail, manufacturing, technology and more are invited to support the students throughout the hands-on curriculum as mentors, field trip hosts or guest lecturers.

YEA! was founded in 2004, at the University of Rochester, with support from the Kauffman Foundation, and now receives backing from the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Sam's Club. The Academy has achieved the following results in its over 100 locations nationwide.

- 100% of YEA! graduates graduate high school on time
- 99% of YEA! graduates enroll in college
- 49% of YEA! students are female
- 56% of YEA! students are underrepresented minorities
- YEA! students have been awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships as a result of their involvement in the program
- YEA! students have launched more than 3,172 businesses in America

Mercer University's Innovation Center will offer state-of-the-art classroom space for YEA! Macon's inaugural program. Classes will be held each Wednesday, excluding holidays, from 4 p.m. – 7 p.m., beginning in October 2016 and ending in May 2017.

“We have seen so much interest among millennials in startups, that we want to expose the subsequent generation to these opportunities as well,” said Susan P. Gilbert, Mercer University Eugene W. Stetson School of Business and Economics Dean. “We are honored to host the Young Entrepreneurs Academy on our campus, in order to support the culture of entrepreneurship in Macon.”

The Bibb County School District has also signed on as a communications partner to help ensure the success of YEA! Macon. “We believe the YEA! program will inspire our young students to dream big, and lead them on a path to success,” said Dr. Curtis L. Jones, Jr., Bibb County School District Superintendent. “The program's innovative approach to challenging young students will allow them to truly participate in an environment that mirrors real world applications that will help them to learn business fundamentals at an early age, and that is exciting.”

The SparkMacon makerspace will help support YEA! Macon as well, with Director Nadia Osman serving as the local program manager. She will oversee the entrepreneurial experience for students, connecting them with local businesses, community leaders and educators to guide the development and formation of their own businesses and social movements.

YEA! Macon is now accepting applications from students for its inaugural program, as well as nominations from local educators and business professionals. The application deadline is September 30, 2016. Nominations can be submitted here: bit.ly/yea-nomination and application can be completed here: bit.ly/yea-application.

For more information about YEA! Macon, visit maconchamber.com, yeausa.org, or contact Program Manager Nadia Osman via email: nosman.yea@maconchamber.com or phone: (478) 361-1313.

About the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce

Established in 1861, the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce is the area's largest business services organization and primary advocate for the Macon business community. The Chamber supports the growth and development of business by offering networking and marketing opportunities, providing valuable benefits to its members, advocating for legislative issues that will promote a healthy business climate, and participating in the economic development efforts for Macon-Bibb. For more information, visit www.maconchamber.com.

About the Young Entrepreneurs Academy

The Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) is a 501(c)3 offering groundbreaking year-long classes that teach middle and high school students how to start and run their own businesses. Throughout the class, students develop business ideas, write business plans, conduct market research, pitch their plans to a panel of investors for startup funds, and launch and run their own, fully formed companies and social movements. The project-based program empowers students to take charge of their futures.

Founded in 2004 at the University of Rochester with support from the Kauffman Foundation, YEA! today serves thousands of students nationwide. In 2011, the United States Chamber of Commerce Foundation became a national sponsor and partner of the Academy to help celebrate the spirit of enterprise among today's youth and tomorrow's future leaders.

YEA! bridges the business and educational communities to fulfill its mission of teaching more students how to make a job, not just take a job. YEA! is made possible by the Kauffman Foundation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and E. Philip Saunders Foundation. For more information, visit www.yeausa.org.

About the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation is dedicated to strengthening America's long-term competitiveness and educating the public on how the free enterprise system improves society and the economy.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations.

About Sam's Club

Sam's Club®, a division of Walmart Stores, Inc. (NYSE: WMT), is a leading membership warehouse club offering savings and services to millions of members in 651 clubs in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Sam's Club offers affordable access to innovative services for families and small business owner, including travel, payroll and HR services, protection plans, legal solutions, cash rewards and more. To learn more about time and money with Sam's Club, visit www.samsclub.com/services.