



## **BRINGING IT HOME**

### **BACKGROUND/BEGINNINGS:**

For more than 100 years, the YWCA of Yakima has encouraged, supported and protected the women in our community. In the century since its founding in 1909, the YWCA has empowered literally thousands of women striving to improve their circumstances and strengthen their future. Throughout the history of the YWCA, we have consistently demonstrated the ability for transformation to best meet the needs of the families we serve. Over 30 years ago, the YWCA opened an emergency shelter for battered women and their children. In 2000 YWCA Board members and civic leaders responded to a growing need within the community. One immediate need was for additional space at the emergency shelter, where 7-20 families per month were consistently turned away due to lack of space. In response to this and to address the critical need for transitional housing and case management for domestic violence survivors, the ***Bringing It Home*** project was born.

The requirements for the YWCA's new home included a centralized location, heightened visibility (for safety reasons); expanded emergency shelter space; increased security and privacy; and most importantly, on-site transitional housing, case management and a comprehensive community resource center. After several options were considered – including remodeling and expanding the Naches Avenue Building, building a brand new facility, or purchasing and renovating an existing building - a perfect solution unexpectedly presented itself. Yakima Convalescent Care and Yakima Manor, two buildings located on one of Yakima's main thoroughfares, became available. These buildings provided a "hand-in-glove" fit for the YWCA's needs, representing a singular opportunity to provide a long-term and sustainable home for the YWCA.

The YWCA Capital Campaign was launched in 2006, dedicated to the purchase and renovation of the buildings, and marking the first time in the YWCA's nearly 100 years of serving Yakima that it sought funds from its community in this manner. The Capital Campaign represented approximately only 25% of the total purchase and development cost for the project, with the remainder targeted to come from public monies and private foundation grants.

***Bringing It Home*** is designed to merge all YWCA programming and operations under one roof in a centralized downtown location. The project involves the rehabilitation of the nursing home/retirement manor properties to increase the old shelter capacity from 4 units (28 beds) to 15 units (44 beds); create 16 self-contained affordable apartments (studio, 1, 2, and 3-bedrooms); develop an on-site community resource center, and; incorporate all administrative functions within the same facility as well. The property is located on a main thoroughfare and on the edge of downtown Yakima. It is directly on the public transportation route and within walking distance to shopping, schools, parks, medical and dental services.

### **PROGRESS/CURRENT:**

Construction began in 2007 on Phase I to complete renovations to the emergency family shelter. As the result of a very successful Capital Campaign and through the hard work, generosity and commitment from this great community, these renovations were completed in December 2008 – nearly a year ahead of the original schedule - moving families into the new facility just before Christmas. What a wonderful ending to an exciting year!

Construction on Phase II, began on May 2010, will transform the former Yakima Convalescent Nursing Home into 16 units of transitional housing. The funding for Phase II includes a \$2.7 million grant from the Washington State Housing Trust Fund and \$1.3 million awarded by Congress, through the tireless efforts of Senator Patty Murray. Following construction on the transitional housing units, work will begin on the community resource center; the center will offer a computer technology lab, classroom space, and public meeting space and on-going “life skills” classes, among other amenities.

### **FUTURE/LOOKING AHEAD:**

The opportunity to transform a domestic violence survivor’s social and economic life conditions means to gain access to the labor market and provide a safe, affordable home for her family. It means having the education, training and resources in place to engage in community and social activity. Ideally, it means to be fully self-sufficient. For many of our clients who come from a marginalized community, it means breaking the cycle of living in extreme poverty and socioeconomic exclusion. **Bringing It Home** will totally transform our agency, from offering emergency shelter services to longer-term affordable housing, individualized case management, and a resource center designed to provide real services to women and children in the community to promote empowerment and self-sufficiency. With the increased space, expansion of on-site services and the addition of low-income housing, we will positively influence a violence-free, successful outcome for the next generation.

It is the commitment of the YWCA to help end the cycle of violence and bring stability and self-sufficiency into the lives of the families we serve; with this commitment comes a civic responsibility in leading this effort. Our role is critical within the community - in meeting the needs of families impacted by domestic violence, in responding to the needs of the community, and in ensuring that through a unity of purpose, the cycle of violence, poverty and homelessness is broken.

In order to achieve our goals, we will create a powerful voice for social change – the voice of those who are directly affected. This will involve active community engagement, expanding the outreach of existing programs/resources while equipping community leaders and gatekeepers with the information and skills necessary to engage the entire community in violence prevention and ending poverty and homelessness.

The importance of this project to our community and constituency is demonstrated daily when we see the same families returning to the shelter (on average, a victim will leave her abuser 7-9 times before making the courageous decision to leave for good) because she has nowhere else to go. The success of the project will be measured in our clients – former victims of abuse who, through the programs and housing offered by the YWCA – becoming vital participants in our community and good providers and role models for their children and for others. **Bringing It Home** will truly be a place to encourage hope, enrich lives and empower dreams.

***“We are only as strong as the weakest among us. We believe that by empowering these courageous women to improve and rebuild their lives, we strengthen our greater community and contribute to its social, economic and cultural well-being.”***