



YWCA Yakima

Expansion Project

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.

PROGRESS/CURRENT:

The YWCA Project is comprised of three primary components:

- 1. Emergency Family Shelter**

The new facility provides critically needed space for women and children and will increase shelter space from 29 to 55 beds. The new space includes private bedrooms, each with its own bathroom, library, children's play area, laundry space, and a fully enclosed courtyard with green space, playground equipment and secured parking for the safety of clients. Construction began in 2007 and through the hard work; generosity and commitment from this great community, a majority of the renovations were completed in December 2008. Currently, shelter renovations are approximately 75% complete; renovations to the shelter will be completed subsequent to the completion of the transitional housing units.

2. Transitional Housing

There currently is not transitional housing specifically designated for those homeless due to domestic violence in Yakima County. The Transitional Housing will provide 16 units of low income housing, including studio, 1, 2, and 3-bedroom units; clients may stay in the housing for up to two years. While residing in our housing, clients will receive individualized case management. Through this new component, we will meet the ongoing need survivors have for affordable housing as they work towards safety and self-sufficiency. Renovation work on the transitional housing units commenced in June 2010, with an anticipated completion date of June 2011.

3. Community Resource Center

The on-site Community Resource Center will offer comprehensive resources, classes and workshops for all survivors of domestic violence. Survivors will receive the “wrap-around” services needed to truly change their lives. Families will participate in life skills classes, continue or complete their education, learn how to find and maintain permanent, affordable housing, and gain valuable job skills, all designed to enable them in attaining autonomy. The space will also accommodate a technology lab, classroom and public meeting space. The demolition and renovation on the resource center is being done in conjunction with the transitional housing units. Final completion of the resource center will be done subsequent to the completion of the transitional housing units.

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. The YWCA will be totally transformed, 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. With the completion of our project, the YWCA will truly be a place to encourage hope, enrich lives and empower dreams.

“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.”