

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

Central Carolinas

3420 Park Road
Charlotte, NC 28209

704-525-5770
www.ywacacentralcarolinas.org

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Fall 2020
yworks

Dear YWCA Family and Friends,

On our 118th anniversary of service, a snowy February day that seems like a lifetime ago, hundreds of YWCA friends gathered to celebrate our powerful mission. At this annual luncheon, we shared plans to transform over three acres into 104 units of affordable housing, making a world of difference for generations.

Keynote speaker, Donna Byrd, founding publisher of *The Root*, shared what many said they needed to hear. **In a period of “othering,” we the people have fallen into a trap of seeing “us” versus “them.”** We mourn how divided and broken the nation feels. This division, she asserted, is fixable by *we the people*, with the power to overcome divisions and find common ground.



Just days later, we powered down our YWCA. We staffed minimally to protect and support our transitional housing residents. We shuttered our fitness center. School buildings closed and, like teachers across the country, our youth programs staff pivoted to provide virtual support to students. Our racial justice and advocacy work moved out of meeting rooms to Zooms.

In the midst of this pandemic, the persistent epidemic of racism became undeniable. The words of James Baldwin reminded us, “not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” With heavy hearts, we continued to lean *all the way into our mission*, much of our work virtual. **Yet the heaviness of what we faced as a country was real, absolute and physical. It was not virtual.**

We are more than six months into this “new normal.” Families send photos of our students cozy at home, reading a book. Residents say how supported and safe they feel. New friends meet us online to advance racial equity. The unanimous support of our mayor and city council allows YWCA to rezone our property, a beacon of light shining on challenging times, a key milestone that brings us ever closer to welcoming our future neighbors.

We give thanks for each of you, for our determined and caring staff, and for all we can achieve when *we the people* find common ground.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Soamoya Rankins".

Soamoya N. Rankins
Board President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirsten D. Sikkelee".

Kirsten D. Sikkelee
Chief Executive Officer



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Staying Safe, Staying Connected

Like all of the organizations and businesses around us, YWCA had to pivot this past March in response to COVID-19, and we continue to pivot to this day. **Our co-ed fitness center and Youth Learning Centers may have closed their doors for in-person programming, but YWCA fitness members, students and transitional housing participants have still been supported in their journeys.**

WELCOME TO YWCA!

JUST A REMINDER BEFORE YOU ENTER:



DO NOT ENTER IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS.

- Muscle pain
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Cough
- Fever
- Chills
- Headache

Fitness members could choose to continue to work up a sweat at home with instructional videos and written workouts from YWCA's director of fitness. YWCA elementary school students stay focused on their studies at home with remote support from youth learning center coordinators.

While our co-ed fitness center has been closed, our Park Road campus still buzzes, with more than 80 people living here through our transitional housing programs. To ensure their safety and the well-being of our staff, YWCA implemented safety protocols immediately in March. Now, as we welcome fitness members back for modified programming, YWCA has put significant safety measures into effect, and new safety signage appears throughout our facility (pictured).

HELP STOP THE SPREAD

SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR SAFETY



Maintain a distance of 6 feet.
Wear a mask in communal areas.

NAMASTAY

6 FEET AWAY



We can assure you that your safety and the safety of our fitness members, program participants and staff is our top priority. Our phased reopening will comply with state guidelines and stringent safety precautions. We were delighted to welcome back fitness members on September 14 at 30% capacity. Our members have embraced our new safety protocols as they reenter our fitness center for the first time since March.

Thank you for your support of YWCA's precautions and for your shared commitment to safety. We couldn't navigate this pandemic without you.



Grounds for Change

Thanks to support from you and our neighbors, donors and City Council, YWCA and The Housing Partnership are proud to be transforming the front lawn of our 10-acre property into 104 affordable housing units. These units will be reserved for households earning 30%-60% area median income - between \$25,050 and \$50,100 for a family of four. They are desperately needed as one solution to Charlotte's ever-growing affordable housing crisis, which has been intensified by the increase in homelessness throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

These 104 homes won't change the past or end the crisis but will make a world of difference for many throughout generations to come. It's a healing way forward.

As CEO Kirsten Sikkelee explains, "In recent years, it's become more and more challenging for individuals to find affordable housing. People are moving outside of the city, and they are commuting from far away. **They should be able to live in Charlotte if they work in Charlotte.**"

Your support and enthusiasm for our affordable housing development has been a bright spot throughout these uncertain times. We are proud to share that we have received a \$3MM donation for this project from The Gambrell Foundation, a \$4MM anonymous donation, as well as \$300,000 from the O'H Rankin Foundation. YWCA Central Carolinas and The Housing Partnership also received unanimous support from Charlotte City Council in the rezoning of our Park Road campus, a critical step in moving this process forward.

We are now focusing on fully fleshing out the architectural, landscaping and front facade details. We plan to break ground for this affordable housing project in mid-2021. **And we expect these beautiful new units will be move-in ready for their first tenants in 2023.**



As the future remains full of unknowns, YWCA is committed to providing stable and affordable housing for our community. We are grateful for your support of this important project and the support of our entire community.

Board of Directors

- Soamoya N. Rankins, president
Shelley Smith, president-elect
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Kirsten D. Sikkelee, chief executive officer



YWCA is thankful for the life and legacy of Sarah Belk Gambrell, 1918 - 2020.

Eliminating Racism



Our black and brown friends, family and neighbors have always faced inequities, injustice and racism. But throughout these past few months, our country's awareness of injustice seems to have reached a tipping point. From COVID-19's disproportionate impact on people of color to the killings of individuals like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and Riah Milton – **the challenges that people of color face have become more and more visible to our city, to our region and to our country.**



At YWCA, we are committed to eliminating racism – it leads our mission. We work to educate everyone about racial justice and to mobilize our community to dismantle the oppressive systems within it. How do we do this?

We create opportunities for dialogue around issues of racial justice through our book clubs and forums. In June, we brought together community leaders – including DA Spencer Merriweather and CMS Superintendent Ernest Winston – for a discussion on

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how COVID-19 has impacted Charlotte's systems, especially for people of color. In August, we hosted a book club on Dayna Bowen Matthew's *Just Medicine: A Cure for Racial Inequality in American Health Care*.

We advocate for policies that will make our systems more just and fair for people of color. Through our ongoing YWomenVote series, we have been sharing vital voter information for the 2020 election and encouraging supporters to reach out to legislators in reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act and the End Racial (And Religious) Profiling Act - all pieces of legislation that will help protect people of color.

We know demanding justice looks different for everyone. It can include participating in marches and public demonstrations or applying pressure to legislators for just policies through phone calls and emails. Whatever your approach, **you help demand justice when you stay civically engaged.** By completing your 2020 census, you help ensure proper funding for community programs and infrastructure. By voting in the 2020 election, either through a mail-in ballot or in-person voting, you make sure that your voice is heard. By continuing open and honest conversations about racism and oppression with friends and family, you ensure change, growth and accountability within your network.



The work to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for ALL is more critical than ever. We're glad you're with us in the work.

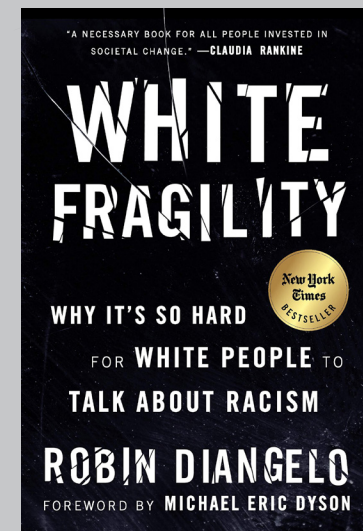
Important Dates!

Make sure you stay civically engaged this fall. Take note of these important dates:

- September 30: 2020 census deadline
- October 9: voter registration ends
- October 15 - 31: one-stop, in-person early voting
- October 27: final day to request an absentee/mail-in ballot (by 5pm)
- November 3: Election Day

YWCA's Book Club

November 19
6pm - 7:30pm
Meeting virtually



Learn more and register at ywcacentralcarolinas.org/book-club.