

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**

Central Carolinas

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[www.ywcacentralcarolinas.org](http://www.ywcacentralcarolinas.org)

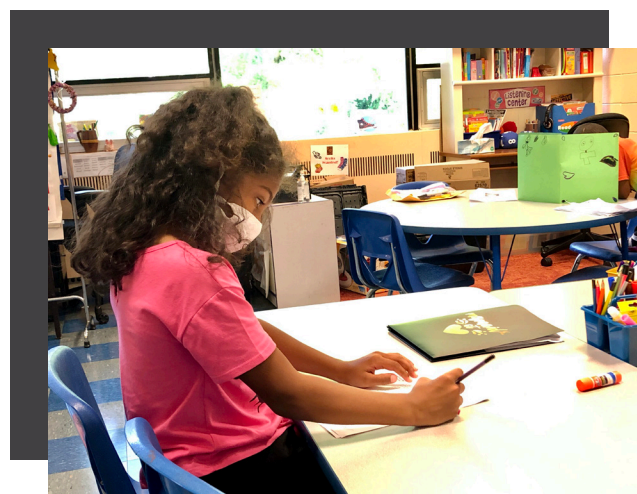
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Summer 2021  
**yworks**

## In 2020, she survived. Today, Kennesha thrives.

In March 2020, Kennesha Peterson had a plan. She had just moved to Charlotte, had found a nice rental house on Craig's List, and would finally be reunited with her children - who had been living with their father - in their new home. Filled with hope, Kennesha mailed off her first rent payment, only to learn that the rental house listing had been a scam. Just like that, her plan fell apart. **Kennesha was homeless, living on the streets and in hotels with no support system.** This was not the plan.

**Kennesha was determined to get her life back on track.** She worked hard to save up money to find a new, safe place to live with her children, but once COVID-19 reached Charlotte, her hours at work were cut in half.



Her search for housing got harder and harder with the challenges of the pandemic and with lower pay.

The year continued to present Kennesha with challenges. She grew ill from living on the streets, ending up in the hospital for a time. And on top of all of these stressors, Kennesha lost her father in an accident.

**But things began to look up when Kennesha called 2-1-1 for housing assistance and was connected to YWCA's Women In Transition program.**

*Story continues on page 2...*

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# "We celebrate our students!"

Every day, YWCA's Department of Youth Programs celebrates our students. Below are images of activities in our Youth Learning Centers, which have begun transitioning back to in-person learning. We're excited to have students back in our classrooms, focusing on their literacy and academic skills! Thank you to our youth programs team whose support impacts our students and families in and out of the classroom.

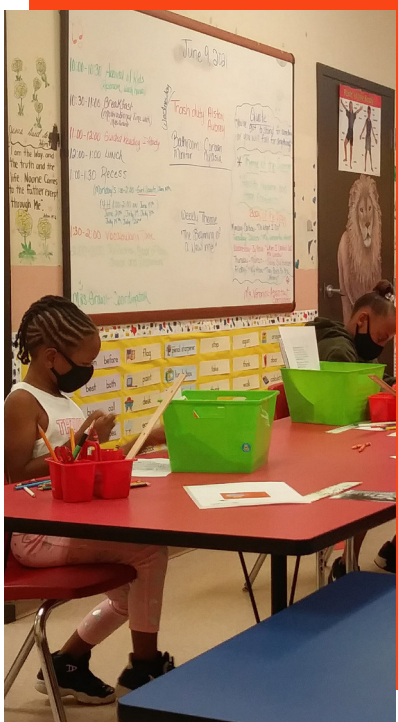


**"We teach students to know, validate and celebrate who they are.** They must know themselves so others don't tell them who they are or are not. We make learning fun and we work hard to keep learning instruction connected to our young people's daily lives."

- Gwen Forney, Billingsville Youth Learning Center Coordinator

**"I make it my daily journey to show up and be a strong support system."**

- Amanda Canteen, Southside Youth Learning Center Coordinator



**"We are just a phone call away from our families. We try to make life just a little easier for our families, with our support for the children. We are convenient, reliable, dependable and creative.** Relationships make a difference."

- Carrie Tucker, Sunridge Youth Learning Center Coordinator









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# CORNING

Corning shares YWCA's commitment to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

Thank you to Corning for supporting our community! For more information, visit [Corning.com](http://Corning.com).

## YWCA's Book Club

August 26  
6pm - 7:30pm  
Meeting virtually



Learn more and register at [ywacentralcarolinas.org/book-club](http://ywacentralcarolinas.org/book-club).

## In November 2020, Kennesha...

entered YWCA's Women In Transition program. She finally had a safe place to live on YWCA's Park Road campus. And when she began to work with YWCA's case manager Amy Rose, things began to fall into place. With Amy's support, **Kennesha was saving money, attending therapy to navigate her grief, and working toward her ultimate goal - regaining custody of her children.**

*"This is the most support I've had in a long time," said Kennesha. "To have this support, it's overwhelming honestly, but YWCA's team treats everybody like family. It's not just a job for them."*

In March of 2021, Kennesha told Amy that she had one month to find a home and get her children back. **In April, Kennesha moved from her single room in YWCA's Women In Transition program to a townhome in YWCA's Families Together program. She was reunited with her two children in their new home.**

Today, Kennesha is focusing on her relationship with her children. After one and a half years apart, the family is reconnecting and growing together. As Kennesha continues to save money she has her eyes on her next goal: getting a permanent house for the three of them to officially call home.



**One year ago, Kennesha was homeless and living without her children. Now, after a year of hard work and perseverance, she and her family have found a safe home together at YWCA.**

*Thank you to YWCA's generous donors who support our transitional housing programs. Kennesha's story is possible because of you.*

## Dear YWCA Family and Friends,

As vaccination rates rise and our country begins the emotional and economic recovery from the devastation wrought by the pandemic, we hear the refrain, "returning to normal." We share that desire to once again experience the simple joys we may have taken for granted prior to 2020: hugging a friend, traveling to visit family, or enjoying a meal together without masks or fear.

Yet even as the pandemic is brought under control, many conditions that were "normal" should remain unacceptable. **We cannot become complacent in the hard work of advancing racial, gender and social justice.**



The unprecedented year plus of COVID-19 ripped back the curtain on what many marginalized people had long known: being black and brown in America can be deadly. YWCAs across the nation declared racism a public health crisis, as our society reckoned with racial violence and the disparities laid bare in the pandemic. **We must remain vigilant in our work to be anti-racist and to dismantle systems of oppression.**

In what has been termed the "SHE-cession," female unemployment reached double digits for the first time in decades with women of color suffering most acutely. Many women held jobs that could not be done remotely but were essential to family stability. Now, 1 in 4 women are contemplating what would have been unthinkable a year ago: downshifting careers or even leaving the workforce. Together, YWCAs continue to push for legislative efforts that support economic security with pay equity, anti-discrimination and paid family leave.

**You are an important part of this mission, our YWCA family. With your support, YWCA keeps driving forward in our collective commitment to the truth, to justice and equity for all.**

Shelley Smith  
Board President

Kirsten D. Sikkelee  
Chief Executive Officer

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