

eliminating racism  
empowering women

**ywca**

Central Carolinas

**YWCA CENTRAL CAROLINAS**

**2024**

*Annual Report*



# THE YWCA *difference*

**YWCA Central Carolinas is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.**

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Our **transitional housing programs** provide safe, affordable housing and comprehensive support for women and families facing homelessness. We prioritize education through our **eight Youth Learning Centers** across two counties, offering free, literacy-focused programs for K-5 students after school and throughout summer. Through our **racial justice programming**, we educate and mobilize the community to combat systemic oppression. And our **co-ed fitness center** empowers individuals in their wellness journey while connecting them to our mission.

*Thank you* **for believing in our mission.**



# YWCA *Leadership*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brittany Conner  
*President*

Andrea Spears Jackson

Frenchie Wilson Brown  
*President-Elect*

Kelly Love-Sayasithsena

Sherr York  
*Treasurer*

Ellen E. Rankin

Judy Seldin-Cohen  
*Secretary*

Soamoya N. Rankins

Jean M. Cochrane

Elizabeth Denton Shah-Khan

Tara Foster

Ashley Smith

Elizabeth Funck

Laurie Guy

Elyse Hamilton-Childres

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

Kirsten D. Sikkelee  
*Chief Executive Officer*

Sarah Lanners Avinger  
*Chief Philanthropy Officer*

Jolaine Elien  
*Chief Financial Officer*

Jeff Nerret  
*Director of Fitness*

Rebecca Stickel  
*Director of Housing*

Tomiaka Wingard  
*Director of Youth Programs*

# DEAR YWCA FRIENDS & FAMILY,

*“Thank yourself!”*

Fifteen years ago, halfway through my staff journey at YWCA, young students from all of our youth learning centers surprised me with handwritten cards to celebrate that service milestone. At home that night, I untied ribbons on bundles of cards, reading them aloud with my husband. While each was precious in its own way, one card in particular captured my heart. It offered a gift to put into practice from that day forward. It was from a 3rd grader named Xavid.

In his card, which he had decorated with a heart that read “I love YWCA,” he’d written:

*“Ms. Kirsten, thank you for a wonderful YWCA. I am so happy that you got someone to feed us snacks and take care of us after school. I have a great time in the YWCA program. **Thank yourself because you have a great life having a great staff.** God bless you and I will keep you in my prayers.”*

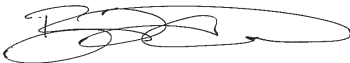
Young Xavid’s exhortation to “thank yourself” quickly went viral among my team, a reminder that — even on the most challenging days — we at YWCA have great lives, doing meaningful work, trying to solve complex problems with the partnership of great colleagues and supporters. When the hard days came, we would remind each other to “thank yourself.” Keeping the mission front and center. Doing our very best.

In this letter, for my last annual report as CEO, our board president graciously handed over the pen for me to write to our YWCA family. After more than 30 years of working for the most inspiring mission I could ever imagine, one that will always motivate me, I am preparing to pass the torch to the next CEO. I am fully confident in the team of volunteers tasked with selecting the next leader for YWCA Central Carolinas. **That future leader, walking forward with our board, our staff and our supporters, will bring fresh inspiration, new meaning and innovative solutions to advance this mission and strengthen this organization.**

That future leader will find a great life at YWCA. That new CEO will be amazed to meet the great staff, board and supporters who will help them to do the heavy lifting of leaning into this mission and sustaining this organization. **Thank YOU for the support and encouragement you will provide our new leader.**

As we approach 2025 and I prepare to downshift into a “special project” role and support a strong leadership transition, I find myself overwhelmed with appreciation for each one of you who has leaned into this mission with us. As Xavid taught me, I hope that you will “thank yourself.” **You have been, you are and you will be part of this amazing YWCA that is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.**

With grateful hearts,



**Kirsten D. Sikkelee**  
Chief Executive Officer  
YWCA Central Carolinas



**Brittany Conner**  
Board President  
YWCA Central Carolinas

# BREAKING THE CYCLE

## Colette's story

**Colette was stuck in a cycle.** Much of her life had been shaped by housing instability, starting when she was a young girl in Cleveland, Ohio. Colette's mother, Rollette, was stuck in low-paying jobs that didn't provide enough to cover rent. As a result, Colette's family often had to move around from place to place. This included homes that were unsafe for young children; as a girl, Colette became a survivor of lead poisoning. **Colette's life had just begun, yet because she didn't have a safe, consistent home, she faced many challenges.**

Later on, she and her family relocated to Charlotte. Years passed by, and Colette was married, then divorced, and the proud mother of two young boys, Brian and Shawn. Although she had always worked, she struggled to make ends meet as a single mother. Stuck in the same cycle of housing instability, Colette and her sons struggled to find a stable home.

In 2009, when Shawn was in elementary school, Colette had to leave her job at Lowe's as she didn't have anyone who could care for him while she was at work. This soon put Colette's family into a very difficult position, as she couldn't find new employment due to the financial crisis of 2008. **Suddenly, Colette and her sons faced homelessness.**

Seeking a path forward, Colette was referred to YWCA's Families Together program by a partner agency. She and her sons moved into one of the townhouses on YWCA's Park Road campus in the fall of 2009. **Finally, Colette had the opportunity to reset and learn the tools to build financial and housing stability for her family.**

In the Families Together program, Colette was determined to create a better life for her family: **"I wanted to give myself a good start on life, keep things stable for my children, and find affordable housing," shared Colette.** Working with program staff, she built a financial literacy foundation and learned to be disciplined in managing her finances. "I learned how to use a calendar to map out my budget and how to pay my rent," as well as tracking upcoming expenses and income, shared Colette. She set goals and routines, maintained her employment, and was even connected with a counselor to help work through abuse she suffered as a child.



Colette and her two sons, Brian and Shawn.

*“YWCA gave me the tools and support I needed to keep going”*

And keep going, she did. **After an entire year of hard work in Families Together, Colette’s determination had paid off: her family obtained a Section 8 Choice Voucher through YWCA’s strategic partnership with Charlotte Housing Authority (now Inlivan).** She graduated from Families Together in January 2011 and moved into a home in Hidden Valley. For the first time in her life, Colette and her sons had the opportunity to plant roots in a home. **Colette stayed in that same house for nearly 13 years. For the first time, Colette felt the peace of stable housing: “You feel relaxed — you feel like part of a community. You grow your own self — you set your own goals.”**

13 years after graduating from Families Together, Colette still uses the same calendar tactic to ensure all of her bills and rent are paid on time. Times are still not always easy, but Colette has the tools to push forward. She just started a new job in transportation in the school system, and she’s excited to help students get to and from school. And she’s incredibly proud of her sons, now adults, who both have maintained steady housing and careers: Brian is a telemetry technician and Shawn works as a machine operator.

Above all else, what Colette learned from her time at YWCA is the power of having good people in your corner, cheering you on. **YWCA’s staff “believed in me, so I believed in myself;” she shared.**

**Thank you for believing in Colette.  
Thank you for supporting YWCA!**



YWCA’s ten Families Together townhomes.

# BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

## *A summer of enrichment*

**YWCA Central Carolinas' Youth Programs had an impactful 2023-2024 school year, serving 171 students across Union and Mecklenburg counties in our eight youth learning centers.** We're proud to share that 56% of our students improved their reading levels or maintained grade-level proficiency, surpassing our goal of 50%. This success reflects both our students' hard work and our team's dedication to providing free, literacy-focused programs within a supportive environment.

The learning didn't stop when the school year ended. **YWCA's summer programming nurtured students' curiosity with hands-on experiences, serving an additional 113 students.** Students became chefs for a day, crafting a homemade meal with the Arts Empowerment Project. Students explored diverse cultures through journeys to places like Hawaii, El Salvador, and India, complete with special guests. And no summer fun is complete without field trips: trips to SeaLife Charlotte, Carowinds, the movies, and more offered fresh adventures and discoveries.

As part of the program, students also had four swim lessons in YWCA's pool. **Students who began the summer hesitant around water ended it with newfound confidence.**

We wrapped up the summer with a vibrant block party, featuring community partners, a baseball workshop thanks to the Knothole Foundation, dancing, and great food — a joyful celebration of our students' growth and the enriching experiences that shaped their summer.



Students enjoying swim lessons in YWCA's pool.



A student learning how to make homemade pizza.



# YWCA'S *impact*

Your support of YWCA Central Carolinas makes a direct impact on the community. From July 2023 to June 2024, thanks to your donations...



**151**

## INDIVIDUALS FACING HOMELESSNESS

had a safe place to live in our transitional housing programs.



**284**

## CHILDREN

from low-income households received after-school literacy support.



**290**

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

were educated and mobilized through racial justice and advocacy events.



Latasha & her family, graduates of Families Together.

# 2023-2024 *financials*

## SUPPORT & REVENUE

### SUPPORT:

Contributions & Grants	\$1,831,199
Governmental Agencies	\$23,708
United Way of Greater Charlotte	\$44,358
In-Kind Support	\$78,798

### REVENUE:

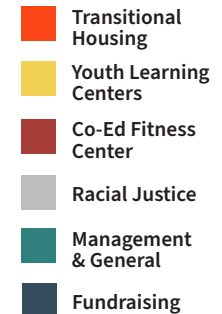
Program Fees	\$923,830
Other Income	\$635,487

**TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE \$3,537,380**

## EXPENSES

Program Services	
Transitional Housing	\$934,836
Youth Learning Centers	\$900,541
Co-Ed Fitness Center	\$709,802
Racial Justice	\$106,850
Management & General	\$431,847
Fundraising	\$371,711

**TOTAL EXPENSES \$3,455,587**



\*The financials above reflect YWCA's internal financial statements from our 2023-2024 fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024. Audited financials will be available upon request.



Pencils sharpened in their case.  
Bells are ringing, let's make haste.  
School's beginning, dreams to chase.  
All are welcome here.