



**Media Release**  
**May 5, 2016**

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**FUNDRAISER GIVES PARTICIPANTS FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS**

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**Calgary, AB — May 5, 2016** — The YWCA of Calgary will host its 9<sup>th</sup> annual **YWCA KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS®** fundraising event tonight starting at 6 p.m. Registered participants, who have been fundraising for weeks, will learn more about the barriers women experiencing homelessness face, while they ‘see one night through her eyes’ by sleeping on a cot in the YWCA’s former gymnasium.

In Canada, women make up a significant and growing percentage of the homeless population. Last year, the YWCA served 1,552 women and their children in one of its emergency shelter, transitional and supportive housing programs.

“I strongly believe that supporting women generates an excellent social return on investment – supporting a woman improves the fate of not only the woman, but also her family which ultimately leads to stronger communities,” says event participant Wanda Rumble. “I am motivated to participate in YWCA Keep a Roof over Their Heads because I fear that current local economic conditions will (negatively) impact fundraising for local causes.”

This year’s event features an expert panel on the unique aspects related to women’s homelessness facilitated by Donna McElligott, CBC Radio host. Panelists include Kim O’Brien, Executive Director of Horizon Housing Society, Katrina Milaney PhD, Assistant Professor of Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies at the University of Calgary and Heather Morley, Director of Client Services at the YWCA.

“Most of the research and literature on homelessness has focused on men’s experience of homelessness, so we’re hoping to give listeners some insight into the gendered experience of women’s homelessness,” says Heather Morley, Director of Client Services, YWCA. “For instance, women are at an increased risk of violence, abuse and victimization if staying on the streets or in mixed gender shelters.”

Following the evening program, participants will prep their cots for ‘lights out’ at 11:00 p.m. and spend the night in a simulated YWCA shelter, replicating the experiences of the YWCA winter shelter clients who access the winter shelter program during the coldest months of the year.

**When:** Thursday, May 5, 2016  
Program 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.

**Where:** YWCA, 1st floor gymnasium, 320 5 Ave SE (access from north parking lot)

**Interview opportunities: 5:45 – 6:15 p.m.**

- Sue Tomney, Chief Executive Officer, YWCA of Calgary
- Karen Gallagher-Burt and Wanda Rumble, event participants

**Photo opportunities:**

- YWCA Winter Emergency Response program shelter set up with 50 cots
- 50 participants will line up in the YWCA north parking lot with their basic necessities in tow and individually experience the emergency shelter intake process
- Panel of three local experts on women’s unique experiences with homelessness

**About the YWCA of Calgary:**

The YWCA of Calgary is the largest and longest serving women’s organization in Calgary. Through its more than 105 year history, the organization has touched tens of thousands of lives and evolved its programs to meet the changing needs of women in the community. The YWCA offers a continuum of service for women, and their families, who are struggling with poverty, homelessness, family violence and isolation. With their focus on empowering women to move from a place of vulnerability to one of resiliency, the YWCA continues to be there, when and where she needs us most.

**For information and interview inquiries please contact:**

Carla Link

Manager, Marketing & Communications, YWCA of Calgary

Phone: 403.705.5779 | Cell: 587.228.8663 | Email: [clink@ywcaofcalgary.com](mailto:clink@ywcaofcalgary.com)