

ADVOCATE

DONOR & VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

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Strength in numbers: a message from the CEO

Since the last edition of the YWCA Advocate newsletter in August of 2014, the strength of our donors, partners, volunteers and ambassadors has helped us to support vulnerable women and their families in many ways.

On September 18, 2014 more than 270 men, encouraged by even more women, walked two laps around Olympic Plaza in high heels. Their efforts and pains helped to support women fleeing family violence at the 9th annual YWCA WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES® fundraising event.

Two months later, on November 20, 2014 the 4th annual YWCA WHYWHISPER Fundraising Gala welcomed more than 740 supporters who enjoyed listening to keynote speaker Erin Brockovich.

Also this fall, Elsbeth Mehrer, Director, External Relations and myself, advocated on issues related to affordable housing and gender-based violence. In December, major

news outlets, including CTV Calgary, interviewed YWCA spokespeople on the topic of domestic violence after former CBC personality Jian Ghomeshi was charged with sexual assault. Also in December, the YWCA and the Black Cat Lounge and Grill brought attention to gender-based violence in our city in conjunction with the nationally recognized 'Light the Night' event.

The holiday season brought many wonderful things including gifts-in-kind donations ranging from blankets to grocery packages. Vital cash donations were also received, which brought the donation total to more than \$648,000. It is wonderful to see the generosity of Calgarians, but the need does not end after the holidays.

In the following pages, you will find stories of strength, resilience and support; like that of a YWCA client and her struggle with homelessness, poverty and illness; a strong YWCA partnership that helps women thrive; and some exciting events I hope you have or will enjoy.

There are many ways we can speak out, connect, support and impact others. The issues women face every day; poverty, homelessness, family violence and isolation cannot be solved by one person or one organization. However, by continuing to advocate about the issues that cause women to be vulnerable, you will help us achieve our vision of women thriving in a safe and equitable community.



Sue Tomney
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA of Calgary



YWCA offers hope

Linda* was born and raised in southern Alberta. Her early life was challenging; living with an alcoholic mother and experiencing years of sexual abuse.

However, she was a dedicated student and determined to finish school. Her hard work paid off and she eventually graduated with a radiology degree from a southeastern California institution and soon earned her license on both the American and Canadian Boards of Radiology.

After four years in a successful career, Linda experienced a severe back injury that impaired her ability to continue to work. While undergoing routine tests related to her back injury, Linda was diagnosed with breast cancer.

The cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatments left Linda feeling alone and depressed. Job opportunities where she lived were limited, so she made the decision to move to Calgary. Here she secured a four-month contract in her field and was hopeful that things were looking up.

Unfortunately, after her contract ended, work opportunities became limited once again and she was struggling to pay her bills. Linda quickly realized she could not continue on her own and had to seek the support of a shelter to ensure a roof over her head and food on the table.

At first, the reality of being homeless seemed temporary. But when weeks, and then months, went by her ability to see a path forward became difficult.



Lacking basic needs made it hard for Linda to look after her health and her back problems began to return. Sleeping on floors and under trees ultimately saw Linda back in the hospital struggling with pain and illness.

Late last year, Linda found the YWCA Winter Emergency Response (WERP) program. At the WERP program, Linda discovered women her age that she could relate to. Women who had experienced many of the same challenges she had.

Every night, Linda was met by the caring WERP team who provided her with a hot meal, basic need items, health care support and most importantly, a quiet place to sleep and focus on her health.

“I feel safe and protected. The YWCA Winter Emergency Response program gives you a taste of sanity in the middle of the insanity.”

Today she is safe, can think about her future and is feeling hopeful again. Linda’s health has improved and she is now in the process of finding permanent housing thanks to the support of YWCA staff and the community connections they have helped her to make.

*Name changed

The YWCA provided...

- More than **8,900** unique clients including more than **2,400** children with support in 2013.
- More than **20,000** hours of direct face-to-face time with clients in our supportive and clinical counselling programs in 2013.

Partnerships help women thrive

In a collaborative approach to alleviate poverty in our community, Momentum and the YWCA of Calgary are working together to address the needs of vulnerable women.

Momentum is a Calgary-based community economic development organization that has successfully supported more than 35,000 individuals through skills training and financial literacy programs for nearly 25 years. More than five years ago Momentum partnered with the YWCA to support clients who were unable to access Momentum's workshops.

The YWCA and Momentum share a common view of women's issues and the need to alleviate poverty. They work together to assist YWCA clients in finding and sustaining employment through two specialized programs.

At the Vermilion Energy/YWCA Employment Resource Centre, Momentum trains YWCA staff to facilitate workshops for their clients on financial health including budgeting, saving and asset building.

They have also trained YWCA staff to teach clients how to stretch dollars. Together they help to build skills to further assist clients in accessing the labour market.

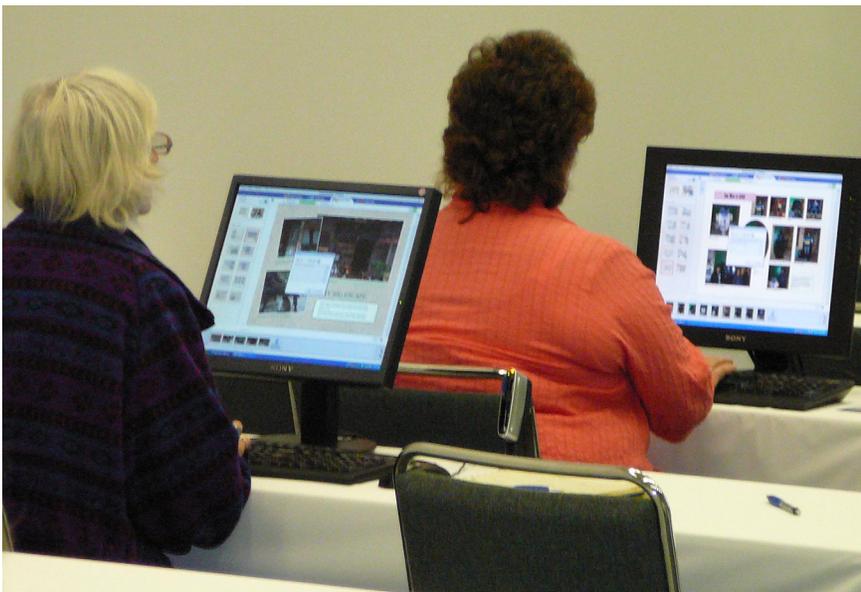
In addition, YWCA refers clients who express an interest in entrepreneurship to Momentum's Women's Venture program. Through workshops and one-on-one coaching, YWCA clients learn skills in financial literacy and business fundamentals that will teach them the goal setting and decision making skills needed to operate a successful business.



“Through the Women's Venture program, women gain the knowledge and confidence to create and operate their own businesses. This often results in a flexible career that brings greater economic returns”, says Carolyn Davis, Community Relations Director at Momentum.

The ultimate goal of both the financial literacy workshops and Women's Venture program is to assist women in exiting poverty while also reducing the need for social services.

By working together, YWCA and Momentum enhance the ability of vulnerable women in our community to move from poverty to a sustainable and healthy future.



Lifelong passion for supporting women

Like many YWCA alumnae, Norma Farquharson has made a lifelong commitment to supporting women in the community.

Throughout her career, Norma has been involved with a wide variety of organizations where she has worked as a board chair or volunteer.

Norma has a background in applied behavioral sciences but she is best known for the workshops she conducted with women in the area of assertiveness training and has volunteered for provincial and national committees in the areas of poverty reduction and women's affairs.

More than 30 years ago, when Norma was working with the Calgary Board of Education, she became involved with a government funded program facilitated at the YWCA downtown location called Contemporary Women. It was this program that encouraged Norma to join the YWCA in 1978 as a Volunteer Coordinator.

During her time at the YWCA, Norma was Chair of the YWCA Social Issues Committee and attended the 1981 YWCA Canada Convention as a voting delegate. Norma also won the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award in the category of Advancement of Women in 1987.

commitment to advocating, supporting and donating to the YWCA and the women it helps.

Today, Norma continues her connection to the YWCA through the YWCA Alumnae Association. The ongoing dedication of the YWCA Alumnae elevates the voices of women in the community. This helps the YWCA to reach more people who can support their mission and the women they serve.



Norma's time at the YWCA demonstrated to her the impact the organization has on vulnerable women and their families.

“The YWCA raised my consciousness about vulnerable women. I had not realized how many women were deserted, battered and widowed until I worked with them to try and improve their lives”.

Through this work, Norma was encouraged to continue to find more ways to help women who were struggling.

After leaving the organization, Norma continued her lifelong

YWCA Alumnae Association

Membership information:

- Open to all past YWCA staff, board members, committee members and volunteers.
- Membership is \$20 per year and includes voting privileges at YWCA Annual General Meetings.
- Two social meetings a year with guest speakers
- Next meeting: May 5, 2015
- Contact: Marcia Davies
 - 403.278.8184
 - Gerry.davis@shaw.ca

Volunteers provide holiday cheer

With an interest in women's health issues as a common bond, a group of eight Obstetrics and Gynecology residents from the University of Calgary decided to seek a volunteer opportunity they could share. Their objective was to give back to the community while learning more about the struggles some of their patients experience and the resources available to support them.

While searching for volunteer opportunities, the group discovered the YWCA of Calgary. They contacted Sue Wilmot, Community Engagement Coordinator and secured a volunteer position that brought holiday cheer to clients at the YWCA Sheriff King Home emergency shelter and education to the eight medical residents.

On December 5, 2014, the eight women spent several hours at the shelter, putting up trees and decorations to enhance the holiday spirit. The group enjoyed interacting with YWCA clients and their children; who had fled family violence in their homes to find a healthier future.

Not only did the decorations bring enjoyment to the clients staying at the shelter, but the experience educated the medical residents on some of the challenges their patient's may experience.



“Those hours gave me insight into what it’s like for women who have experienced domestic violence” said Kayla, one of the University of Calgary residents. “They experience many issues that some of our patients do and it was a great opportunity for me to understand how to better support patients on a personal level.”

Kayla went on to explain that the clinics and hospitals she and her fellow residents work in see some patients who are being treated for mental and physical trauma, often related to family violence. By volunteering at the YWCA, the group brought some fun to clients while deepening their own understanding

of the resources women have in the community.

Volunteers are a key component to helping the YWCA achieve its mission to intervene, empower and lead where and when women need them most. They bring fresh ideas, unique perspectives and are exceptional ambassadors for the YWCA.

YWCA Volunteers

If you would like to volunteer:

Contact Sue Wilmot
Community Engagement
Coordinator:
volunteer@ywcaofcalgary.com

Or visit:

ywcaofcalgary.com/how-to-help

Upcoming events

YWCA CELEBRATE

On Thursday, March 5, 2015, the YWCA once again celebrates women.

Our annual cocktail event, in conjunction with International Women's Day, is a networking event celebrating women. Please join us for an opportunity to mix and mingle with your friends, sisters, mothers, aunts, daughters and colleagues to celebrate women here in Calgary, and around the world.

To purchase your tickets or for more information: [visit ywcaofcalgary.com/celebrate](http://visit.ywcaofcalgary.com/celebrate)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The YWCA is part of a collaborative group that is hosting local, family friendly events on Sunday, March 8, 2015. By attending, participants can learn what they can do to help us achieve gender equality.

A celebration is taking place at Cardel Place and activities are planned at Calgary Public Libraries.

For more information, visit:

iwd-calgary.com



YWCA KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS®

Gain some understanding of what women experiencing homelessness see everyday when accessing the YWCA Winter Emergency Response program and other YWCA housing and shelter programs.

By participating you raise awareness, and funds, to help vulnerable women have safe and healthy lives.

Register at ywcakeeparroof.com and start fundraising today.

Event: Thursday, May 7, 2015

Event sponsor: **Hopewell**

Past events

4th annual YWCA WHYWHISPER Fundraising Gala

On November 20, 2014 the YWCA held its 4th annual YWCA WHYWHISPER Fundraising Gala at the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre.

The YWCA hosted best-selling author and human rights advocate Erin Brockovich as the keynote speaker. Erin shared her story of adversity

and her rise from an underdog to a worldwide inspiration with a crowd of more than 740 supporters.

Light the Night

The YWCA joined with 32 YWCA's across the country to 'Light the Night'. An event intended to elevate the issue of gender-based violence in our country.

From coast to coast, local structures and monuments, including the Calgary Tower and the Langevin Bridge in Calgary, the CN Tower in Toronto and BC Place Stadium were lit red in honour of the 25th anniversary of the murdered women at a Montreal post secondary institution on December 6, 1989, because they were women.

Save the date...

YWCA of Calgary Annual General Meeting Wednesday, June 24, 2015.

10th anniversary of the **YWCA WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES®** Thursday, September 17, 2015

5th annual YWCA WHYWHISPER Fundraising Gala Thursday, November 19, 2015

Flexibility and empowerment

Without caring, consistent and professional support, she may continue to struggle to find her next meal or a roof over her head.

In the last edition of the YWCA Advocate we celebrated gifts-in-kind; in this edition we're exploring the value of monetary donations, as they enable the YWCA to provide consistent professional support which ensures women can shift their focus from surviving to thriving.

Your monetary donations offer the YWCA flexibility and empowerment. Because of your financial support, Sally and her children can talk to the same counsellor from one week to the

next, minimizing the trauma of having to retell their story over and over again.

That counsellor can meet them where they're at, supporting their basic needs, as well as mental health, safety, employment and personal development needs.

Because of your dollars, Sally and her children can move safely and seamlessly from an emergency shelter to transitional housing and back into the community.

Because of your investment, the YWCA exercises exemplary business practices. We retain and develop staff

and volunteers, thereby maintaining excellence in our frontline, fundraising and financial management practices.

On behalf of the approximately 9,000 vulnerable Calgarians who will access YWCA programs in 2015, thank you.

The YWCA is committed to ongoing accountability as well as community impact. To learn more about the impact of your donations, please visit our website at ywcaofcalgary.com and follow us on social media.



The YWCA of Calgary is one of the largest & longest serving women's organizations in Calgary. Through its more than 104 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 more than 30 programs that create a continuum of service for women, and their families, who are struggling with poverty, homelessness, family violence and isolation.

With our focus on empowering women to move from a place of vulnerability to one of resilience, the YWCA represents one of the largest social agencies in the city, serving more than 8,900 Calgarians in 2013 alone.

YES! I want to help vulnerable women in Calgary.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____ PC _____

Phone _____

ENCLOSED IS MY SINGLE GIFT OF:

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

I WANT TO SUPPORT YWCA OF CALGARY WITH A MONTHLY DONATION:

Pre-authorized withdrawal of \$ _____ every month.
(Please include credit card information at right or attach a void cheque.
You may cancel or change your monthly gift at any time.)

Date _____ Signature _____

I AM MAKING MY DONATION BY: (CHECK ONE)

Cheque (Payable to: YWCA of Calgary) VISA MC AmEx

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____ Security Code _____

Complete this form and mail to:

YWCA of Calgary 320 5th Ave SE, Calgary, AB T2G 0E5

Donations of \$20 or more will receive a tax receipt.
YWCA of Calgary respects the privacy of our donors.

www.YWCAofCalgary.com/donate or call 403-294-7343

Charitable Registration #108227927RR0001