

YWWhat's Happening @ the YW

SPRING/SUMMER 2023



WE BUILT IT... AND THEY CAME!

The sun was shining, a warm breeze was blowing, and Mayor Lloyd Winnecke was all smiles as he joined several dozen supporters in cutting the ribbon on the YWCA's new Toyota Indiana Playground late last summer.

The playground is in the backyard of the YWCA and is used by children served in the residential and after-school programs there.

As youngsters tried out the new equipment on that beautiful day, laughter was heard, and many of the adults commented on the colorful and uplifting space. It was hard to imagine how, just months before, this area was dismal, worn down, and in dire need of a transformation.

"Quality playgrounds have a positive impact on a child's development," says Erika Taylor, YWCA CEO. "All children need the opportunity to run, jump, throw, explore, and thrive through outdoor play." Taylor adds that in addition to physical benefits, playgrounds also allow children to improve other skills such as problem solving, reasoning, and social interaction.

The YWCA playground project began with a community-wide fundraising campaign that kicked off with matching funds from Mattingly Charities. In tandem with dozens of individual and business donors who came on board, the project received a huge boost with the financial support of Toyota Indiana and CenterPoint Energy. The project tagline "If You Build It, They Will Come" garnered interest from all over the city.



WE BUILT IT... AND THEY CAME! cont.

The actual renovation of the area was the culmination of many hours of planning and research on the part of YWCA staff, other experts on child development, and professional playground installers. The overall project was much more involved than simply placing new play apparatuses. Among the many things to be considered: The yard needed to be leveled, new ground covering needed to be put down, and a new fence constructed.

The overall result of this project is a beautiful, colorful, and welcoming space for children and their parents to reap the benefits of outdoor play. The new playground is equipped with two vibrant play structures, an array of musical features, opportunities for sensory play, and a water feature. The transformation also included a brightly colored rubber ground covering, new fencing, benches, bike racks, and new landscaping.

"Our children come to the YWCA when they're most vulnerable," says Taylor. "Playgrounds provide a fun atmosphere for parents and children to enjoy quality time together, advance family relationships, and improve overall physical and mental health. We are incredibly grateful that our community agreed with this assessment and stepped forward in a big way to make this dream a reality. This project will benefit thousands of children during its lifetime. We could not be happier." ■



Want to support the YWCA? We make giving easy!

RECURRING GIFTS

Did you know that you can set up automatic gifts to the YWCA through our website?

Simply visit www.ywcaevansville.org and choose "Recurring" from the drop-down menu.

Donations can be done on an annual or monthly basis - your choice!

MATCHING GIFTS

Check with your HR department to see if your employer offers a matching gift program.

Most companies that offer this benefit require that a simple form be completed by the employee and then mailed to YWCA for verification.

Taking advantage of a matching gift program can double your dollars for a cause you love!

LEGACY GIFTS

Do you want to include the YWCA in your estate planning?

CEO Erika Taylor would love to talk with you about setting up a planned giving program that will highlight your commitment to the YWCA and cement your legacy for years to come.

Erika can be reached at:
812-422-1191 or
etaylor@ywcaevansville.org

YWCA WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR of CRISIS SERVICES



"I landed exactly where I was supposed to land."

New YWCA director shares her approach to domestic violence and her vision for the future

There is a thank you letter hanging in the office of Victoria Mills, the YWCA's new Director of Crisis Services. A sprawling four pages in length, the hand-written note is from a former client, who arrived at the YWCA last summer a broken woman. With a history of sexual abuse, alienation from her family, homelessness, and very little self-esteem, the future looked bleak. Six months later -- with help from the YWCA -- she was able to move into her own residence. She also reestablished a relationship with her family, has identified short-term and long-term goals, and feels more confident than she has in decades.

"It's all about empowerment," says Mills, who began her employment with the YWCA in August of 2022, overseeing the facility's domestic violence and emergency housing programs. "When people feel empowered, they acquire confidence, make better decisions, and learn to be self-sufficient. These women deserve a good life."

A former case manager with the Department of Child Services, Mills brings a wealth of knowledge to her position. At DCS, she worked with a diverse population that included those with a history of domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, and who had children with many needs -- not unlike the clients she sees every day at the YWCA. "There is a lot of crossover between these jobs," she says.

With a bachelor's degree in criminal justice/juvenile justice, and currently studying for a master's in criminal justice, Mills has a strong legal background and is comfortable with the court system, particularly when it comes to protecting and advocating for domestic violence victims. "I attend domestic violence court every week to be a voice and source of information for victims and their children," she says.

When she arrived at the YW, Mills had several immediate priorities. Updating and modernizing intake forms, raising the resident census, and ensuring that the staff shared the same vision and mission as the YW were completed within her first month. Building on her strong belief in empowerment, she began weekly one-on-one meetings with her staff members to hear their ideas and concerns and to mentor them to take on more responsibilities within the shelter. She took the time to get to know other directors and staff members to make sure lines of communication are open and to boost efficiencies. "Everyone here has been so helpful," she says.

As her time at the YW has grown, so have her activities. On the front burner for Mills right now is increased community outreach, along with an elevated presence at community events. "I want to educate people. I want people to understand that you don't have to be hit to experience domestic violence," she says. In that vein, her goal for 2023 is to make presentations at every middle and high school in Evansville regarding dating violence. Mills says that teaching students what to look for early is a powerful preventative tool for helping them avoid unhealthy relationships in the future.

And this is just the beginning for Mills.

"I want to cross-train employees. I want to increase participation in our domestic violence support groups. I want to get the word out that all of the YW's domestic violence offerings are also available to people who aren't staying in our shelter. But most of all, I want more room," she says with a smile, referring to the fact that the shelter is almost always full, with a former office being turned into a client bedroom and the community lounge being used as sleeping space for residents on a regular basis.

When asked if she enjoys her job, Mills is quick to point out that it's a perfect fit for her. "I love what I do," she says. "Every day is different. I have a heart for serving, and I landed exactly where I'm supposed to land." ■

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

The YWCA is fortunate to have many caring donors to brighten the days of our clients and to provide crucial necessities as the women and children we serve rebuild their lives. Shown are just a few of our friends who have opened their hearts to us in a variety of ways.

Pictured top to bottom: We love our teenage donors who understand the challenges our clients face. Alexandra Healy and her friends from Mt. Vernon High School donated hygiene items for our adult clients and craft kits for our younger residents. ■ The Women's Fund of Warrick County provided, once again, much-needed financial support for our YES! residential recovery program. Shown are Stephanie Gerhardt of the Women's Fund and Victoria Mills, YWCA's Director of Crisis Services. ■ It was a family affair as Jennifer Long and her three daughters dropped off cozy blankets and sheets to keep our young residents warm on a very cold day last winter. ■ Agencies working together—there's nothing better! When Holly's House received a donation of small appliances they didn't immediately need, they generously shared these items with YWCA residents who were moving out on their own. ■ Each year, our residential clients are treated to a holiday gift bag from our generous friends at Gerling Law. Last December, the bags contained a warm blanket, a coffee mug with hot cocoa, and lots of personal care items. As one client said, "It feels nice to be pampered!" ■ **Pictured below:** In honor of Women's History Month, this group of employees at Target East hosted a dinner and game night for our residents. The aroma of an Olive Garden feast filled our building, as did the laughter and joy from our residents for this special evening. ■





Pictured above left to right: The group “Valentine’s Day for Indiana Women’s Shelters” once again delivered joy to our clients. The group selected YWCA to be the lucky recipients of these sweet gifts in Evansville. The Indiana group raises funds on its Facebook page and makes deliveries to shelters across the state each year. This year, one of the local coordinators, Taylor, stopped by to deliver sweet gifts for our women and children to YWCA CEO, Erika Taylor. ■ For several years, our friends from the University of Southern Indiana’s chapter of Alpha Sigma Tau have supported our mission with generous donations collected through their philanthropic projects. Their positive energy and drive to help others inspires us and we are grateful for their partnership! ■ **Pictured below left to right:** Our residential clients were thrilled to receive this generous donation of purses and wallets from Shoe Carnival. Pictured left to right are Cathy Wellmeier, Nikki Smith, and Jennifer Griese from Shoe Carnival’s accessories department. ■ Our very generous friends from the Evansville Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. stocked our shelves with feminine hygiene items for our residential clients. Donations like these help us spend more resources on quality programming for our residents, and we are very thankful for their support! Pictured from left to right are Mariama Wilson, Melody McCoy, Stephanie Terry, Toni Hamilton, Vicki Rouse, and Elexica McAlister. ■



Interested in being part of our donor family? We’d love to have you! Donation drives, activities for our clients, gifts for any holiday - we’re open to all ideas. Or we could offer you a few of our own! Just give us a call at 812-422-1191.

CARING KITCHEN PROJECT - STIRRING THINGS UP AT YWCA EVANSVILLE!

At YWCA Evansville, meal time provides peace, respite, and fellowship to the women and children who call our building home. About 18,000 meals are served each year to our residents, a task which has become a challenge in recent years due to an outdated, inefficient kitchen that lacks a functional layout, storage space, and much-needed commercial-grade equipment. With these needs in mind, we embarked on our Caring Kitchen Project to completely transform our decades old kitchen.



Major components of the project include:

- 🥄 Replace residential grade appliances with commercial equipment
- 🥄 Install large stainless island with moveable features (e.g., warming drawer, storage units, trash receptacles, mounted microwave)
- 🥄 Replace mid-century plumbing configuration
- 🥄 Replace damaged flooring
- 🥄 Remove awkward L-shaped cabinetry to improve workflow
- 🥄 Replace sanitation system
- 🥄 Improve lighting; upgrade electrical
- 🥄 Provide movable storage throughout the space
- 🥄 Replace grease trap per city/state code requirements



Our Caring Kitchen Project Campaign is currently underway and your donation will help us upgrade the current space into a practical, well-designed kitchen that will serve our needs for the next 50 years. We hope you will help us stir things up at YWCA Evansville by supporting our Caring Kitchen Campaign!





America's BEST HIGH-YIELD CHECKING ACCOUNT for 2023



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Annual Percentage Yield accurate as of 03/17/2023. Rate subject to change. Minimum \$25 required to open. Contact any employee for further information about applicable terms and fees. Applicable on balances up to \$20,000. Some requirements apply. ATM fee reimbursement limited to \$15 per account per month. Fees reimbursed based on transaction details obtained by the ATM provider. Based on a 31-day month. Fees or other conditions could reduce earnings on the account. Mastercard is a registered trademark, and the circles design is a trademark of Mastercard International Inc. Federally Insured by NCUA.



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YWCA IS ON A MISSION

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For more information about the YWCA, or to make an online donation, please visit www.ywcaevansville.org.

Join the YWCA in the fight to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice and freedom for all!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Women's Equality Day Luncheon
August 24, 2023 | 11:30 AM
Old National Events Plaza

Legacy Auction
September 13 - 20, 2023
Online Auction Open for Bidding

Tastes & Treasures Holiday Luncheon
November 8, 2023 | 10:00 AM
Evansville Country Club

Please visit our website,
ywcaevansville.org, or call the YWCA
(812) 422-1191 for details and updates on all of
our events.

YWCA
IS ON A
MISSION