

Impact100 Westchester Core Mission Grant Report: Supporting the Needs of Vulnerable Women During COVID-19 at the YWCA Residence

YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester: Use of Impact100 Westchester's Core Mission Grant

The YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester (YWCA) applied Impact100 Westchester's generous \$24,500 Core Mission Grant (received June 3, 2020) toward the following COVID-19-related expenditures for its Residence:

- **Professional cleaning fees** for the Residence common area in an effort to keep the facility virus-free - \$10,595.
- **Air filters** for the Residence Common Area filtration equipment - \$3,584
- **Supplies** including personal protective equipment) such as masks and gloves, cleaning products, scanning thermometers, etc. to help us adhere to safety protocols and prevent the virus from infecting any resident - \$11,680;
- **Increase Site Monitor salary** to perform temperature checks, sign-in, etc. - \$15,485

Total costs; \$41,344

The Need Met by the Core Mission Grant – and the Grant's Beneficiaries

The YWCA has suffered operational challenges amidst the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, between revenue shortfalls from the suspension of fee-for-service programming (such as childcare, fitness programming, and facility rentals) and necessary but unbudgeted expenditures to adhere to COVID-19-related safety protocols. An even bigger challenge, however, lies with operating the YWCA Residence.

Since 1930, the YWCA has provided safe, affordable, comfortable housing for low-income women, working professionals, and women in transition who want independent living without the expense of an apartment. In the beginning, the YWCA had two small houses on Church Street for five women in need of housing, thus starting the first affordable supportive housing in the White Plains area. In 1968 the Presbyterian Church donated the Kennedy Duncan Building on North Broadway, and the YWCA residence became a permanent facility. An addition was constructed in 1972 through the generosity of Lila Wallace.

Today, the YWCA is the largest provider of supportive housing for low-income women in New York State and the ONLY one in Westchester County. The Residence provides a safe, affordable, permanent supportive housing community for 193 low-income women, including those who were formerly homeless, formerly incarcerated, elderly, very low-income, and survivors of domestic violence. Women who choose to make their home at the YWCA reflect the richness of diversity represented by their color, race, age, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, recovery, and life experience. To qualify for housing at the Residence, tenants must be female, 18 years of age or older, and they must meet income qualifications

under the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Full-time students are not eligible for the Residence unless they qualify for an exception under the IRS code.

In addition to housing, the YWCA works to help its residents attain self-sufficiency with the following additional support services:

- A food pantry and clothing boutique;
- Case management services (to access government benefits, medical care, and behavioral health services); and
- Financial literacy and vocational skills training with workshops and one-on-one mentorship.

The YWCA's residents have typically struggled financially, which is why they depend upon the safe, supportive community that The Residence provided. The YWCA has always provided a food pantry that the women can access, but the pantry was intended to be only a supplemental source of food.

However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 60% (115) of all of our tenants found themselves unemployed and unable to afford food or even basic necessities. Some of our residents have compromised immune systems and loathe to leave The Residence for work or to procure essentials due to safety concerns.

Impact of the Impact100 Westchester Core Mission Grant

With the strain on an already tight budget, the YWCA did not have extra funds to meet the added expenses necessary to ensure the wellbeing of our residents. Impact100 Westchester's Core Mission Grant enabled us to maintain as healthy as possible environment. We were also able to provide appropriate cleaning to the common areas, purchase much-needed PPE, cleaning supplies, air filters, etc., and test visitors upon entry to ensure that our residents remained safe and healthy.

To help our newly-unemployed residents with their unemployment situation, we are offering Zoom workshops on navigating the unemployment process and paying bills/credit card debt.

One of our residents shared the following testimonial with us: *"I have a life again. I'm not lonely. I'm not hungry. I have a comfortable place to live, I have beautiful support, I have plenty of food and clothes on my back. I can afford to pay my rent. My day isn't about survival anymore. My day is about living my best life. Happiness is my reality again."*

In a year that has been fraught with challenges, the time for "community" has never meant more. We are enormously proud of the incredibly positive impact the YWCA has had on the lives of so many. We are determined that come what may, we must go on to enrich people's lives for another 90 years and continue our mission of eliminating racism and empowering women. **Impact100 Westchester's support has aided us greatly in our efforts.** Thank you for your generosity and for your faith in our mission.