race against racism

The Racial Justice Program is a Hallmark Program of the YWCA. Its clear mission is to impact our community with meaningful change and measurable results. The YWCA does not intend to simply raise awareness of the issues, we intend to promote real change. Our goal is not to pave the way for the future, it is to create the future, a better future. (ywca USA)

The YWCA holds the conviction that racism undermines a person’s quality of life. Far from being harmless, it denies a person opportunity, dignity, security and freedom. On April 24th, the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg hosted the sixth annual Race Against Racism. Over 800 walkers and runners converged on City Island to raise awareness and to emphasize the importance of equality and harmony in our diverse local community. Included in the pack were over sixty children who completed the 5k course! Thank you to our top sponsors WGAL 8, PSECU, The John Crain Kunkel Foundation, Penn State Harrisburg, Target and The Hershey Company.

Before the race, Sergeant Kristal Turner-Childs and BlueCross fitness trainer, Gina McDonald led participants through warm-up exercises. The Bumbada Drum Group got everyone to the starting line with great drum beats. Valerie Corbin Ketchen (YWCA Association Board President) and Tina Nixon (YWCA CEO) welcomed the crowd before Lori Burkholder (WGAL anchor) sent the racers off with the blast of a horn.

The highly coveted Team Challenge Cup went home with Deloitte Consulting LLP, which amassed a team of more than 70 colleagues, family and friends! After the race, everyone enjoyed beautifully prepared and displayed ethnic foods, catered by Sodexo.

The entertainment was diverse too. God’s Army of Tenacity provided inspiring gospel voices, Hip Hop the Clown painted faces and made balloon animals, while a Chinese cultural troupe and Hip Hop Group demonstrated

(Sodexo catered the race against racism.)

(Racers cross the Walnut St. Bridge during the 5k run.)
In the past several months I have been honored with a number of awards, including the Wally Amos Community Service Award, the Urban Connection Heritage Award, the Dr. Martin King Luther Jr. Leadership for Change award and, most recently, the Frank Grady Outstanding Professional Award, presented by the United Way of the Capital Region in May. To have my work -- and our agency -- recognized by my peers is of course gratifying, but ultimately, these awards reinforce two things:

First, the awards underscore the importance of collaboration. Collaboration first and foremost of YWCA staff and Board members, who are so dedicated to fulfilling our mission and investing in our clients, and without whom I could not do my job. And, collaboration in a broader sense -- the spirit of alliance fostered by the majority of local agencies serving our population. In forging partnerships, we avoid duplicating services, something I am deeply conscious of, while extending the range of available programs to even the most marginalized members of our diverse community.

Second, I am reminded of the growing numbers of people in our community who are still in desperate need of services and programs to give them the confidence and skills they require to get their lives moving in a positive direction.

Threatening our ability to fulfill our obligation to the underserved is the potential of further budgetary cuts. I will continue to publicly encourage Governor Rendell and other elected officials to finalize the State budget in a timely manner and impress upon them the importance of collaboration and contingencies to avoid staff layoffs while ensuring that every client continues to have access to essential services.

While summer brings a renewed sense of freedom and optimism, we remain focused on the challenges ahead. I wish you and your family a happy and healthy summer.

Supported Employment

In March 2010, the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg’s newest program opened its doors. The Supported Employment Program helps people with severe mental health disabilities to obtain competitive work in the community and provides support to ensure success in the workplace. By using a personalized vocational approach, YWCA employment specialists assist people in reaching short-term and long-term goals related to employment. Individuals are offered assistance in finding and maintaining jobs that capitalize on personal strengths, interests and motivations.

Research shows that 6 out of 10 individuals with a mental health disability can work a job in the community if he/she is provided with the right types of services and support. (Bond et al., 2001) YWCA employment specialists listen to individual preferences and interests and seek out jobs in those areas. For those who are unsure about potential job fields, employment specialists provide guidance and answer questions about what job is a good match.

“Supported Employment is so effective because as an Employment Specialist I am able to personalize the job search to meet the unique needs of each consumer and enable them to use employment as a means to meet their recovery goals,” says Marlai, Employment Specialist.

Race Against Racism

Their moves until the event adjourned just before Noon. The purpose of the Race Against Racism is two-fold: to bring our diverse local communities together in a fun and challenging event to promote unity and raise a voice against intolerance, and secondly to generate funding for racial justice projects in our community, including annual trainings for educators, religious leaders, social workers, volunteers, political figures, and corporate employees to expand knowledge about the current issues of racial justice and the reality of prevalent “isms” in our everyday world.

Cultural bridges to justice will once again conduct this year’s trainings. Co-facilitators Jona & Sandy will provide practical anti-oppression and racial justice information. On October 5th & 6th participants explore a framework and common language to discuss race and racism.

Please call Maria at 724-2250 for more information or to register for this two-day training.

Hip Hop dancers entertain the crowds
junior board update

In its second year, the Junior Board of the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg boasts 15 members between the ages of 16 and 35. The Junior Board seeks to promote awareness and support of the YWCA’s mission with the assistance of young professional women in the Harrisburg community. The board welcomed a number of new members in 2010; the combination of their enthusiasm with the experience of returning members enabled the board to jump right into this year’s activities.

Camp Reily, the YWCA’s summer day camp, is a priority project for the Junior Board. This year members wasted no time getting the fundraising started for their second annual camp cleanup. In March, the Junior Board partnered with Isaac’s Deli for a fundraising evening. Isaac’s agreed to donate 25% of the proceeds from friends of the YWCA who dined at the Paxton Street and Lemoyne Isaac’s Deli for a fundraising evening. Isaac’s agreed to donate 25% of the proceeds from friends of the YWCA who dined at the Paxton Street and Lemoyne Isaac’s locations to the Junior Board. Individuals spent over $900, from which the Junior Board was given $235. That’s a lot of sandwiches!

In April, the Junior Board took a more sophisticated approach and sponsored a fundraising happy hour at Privado in downtown Harrisburg. Friends, co-workers and fellow board members sipped martinis shaken up by celebrity bartender (and YWCA CEO), Tina Nixon. Privado generously donated all tips from the evening to the Junior Board. A raffle was also a feature of the event. Guests could purchase raffle tickets and ‘bid’ on a variety of prizes donated by local businesses. In addition to raising more than $800 for the Junior Board, partygoers discovered that Tina makes one mean Cosmo!

These efforts raised funds necessary to undertake the camp cleanup in May. The cleanup depends on volunteers, but it takes more than elbow grease. Two big ticket projects Board members wanted to tackle were painting the enormous deck spanning two sides of the camp lodge, and purchasing additional outdoor seating. Thanks to a couple of Junior Board members who went above and beyond, both of these projects were accomplished prior to the cleanup – and at no cost! More than 20 volunteers worked on everything from planting flowers to scrubbing toilets; from organizing sporting equipment to spraying poison ivy. The cleanup fell on a beautiful spring day, the work was rewarding and the positive impact on the camp noticeable. The volunteers left with a great sense of satisfaction knowing their efforts will benefit more than 120 inner-city children who attend the camp this summer.

Clearly, it has been a busy year for the Junior Board, and the pace is not slowing. The board members are beginning to plan for a fall event and will continue to attend the numerous events in support of the YWCA as the year goes on. If you would like more information about the Junior Board or know someone who may be interested in joining in 2011, please contact Board President, Nicole Stezar at nicolestezar@yahoo.com.

housing programs offer a new start

The YWCA Bridge and Transitional housing programs offer shelter to homeless women and their children. Applicants must work closely with case managers to develop goals and objectives aimed at removing any obstacles to sustaining employment and permanent housing. These one-year and two-year programs require participants to attend a series of life skills classes to better prepare them for self-sufficiency. Chris and Martha (names have been changed) are both single mothers who entered the YWCA housing program due to homelessness.

a bright future

Chris and her 4 year old daughter entered the Bridge Housing Program while Chris was five months pregnant with her second child. She struggled with bad credit and money management. After her child was born, Chris attended YWCA parenting and finance classes and worked hard to educate herself. She followed her welfare requirements and was a shining star at the YWCA.

One day she received a letter regarding subsidized housing; it stated that she had been denied due to a poor credit report that reflected unpaid hospital bills. Having gained a new level of confidence with the support of her case manager, Chris decided to appeal the decision. She corrected her credit report and proved that she had insurance at the time of her hospitalization.

The Bridge Housing Program is a one-year program, but thanks to her hard work and dedication, Chris achieved self-sufficiency and moved into her own apartment with her children in less than 11 months!

a fresh start

Martha entered the Transitional Housing program in February 2010. She had three young children with her, (‘housing’ continued on p.6)
CEO wins award

In May, Tina Nixon, CEO of the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg, received the Frank Grady Outstanding Professional Award. Named after the United Way of the Capital Region’s Executive Director from 1972 to 1986, this award is presented to an individual who shows an exemplary commitment to service in our community as well as, leadership, creativity and accomplishment. Tina is the youngest leader to receive this honor.

In her seven-year tenure as CEO, Tina has not only been instrumental in growing the budget from $4.6M to $5.2M, but also in ensuring that the YWCA has a consistent presence in the community.

YWCA program offerings have expanded considerably in response to diverse client needs. In 2006, our YW Works employment readiness program expanded to include a response to diverse client needs. In 2006, our YW Works employment readiness program expanded to include a response to diverse client needs.

YWCA President’s Award - for a significant contribution to a YWCA program, service or resource development.

Sarah Alyce Wright Award - presented to a YWCA Board or Committee member who has made significant contributions to the YWCA in advocacy or public policy.

Please contact Devan at 717.724.2248 or ddrabik@ywcahbg.org for information or visit www.ywcahbg.org.

join us for the YWCA Annual Meeting
September 21, 5:30 p.m. for the presentation of the

The Redy Award - for significant contributions to children’s activities through personal energy and time.

The Ella Frazier Award - for work toward the elimination of racism and the promotion of diversity in Central Pennsylvania.

Jane Addams Peace Award - for the promotion of peace through community action and serving as a living example(s) of quite courage.

For more information contact Maria Memmi at 717.724.2250 or mmemmi@ywcahbg.org

CEO (continued on p.8)
CEO wins award (continued from page 6)

The Supported Employment program to assist individuals with mental health and/or drug and alcohol abuse issues in securing employment.

During last year’s budget impasse, Tina advocated tirelessly on behalf of the YWCA. The YWCA was forced to layoff six employees and cut the hours of five others in order to maintain services and all programs to those in need. Though she rarely talks about it, Tina has overcome significant adversity in her own life to be the woman she is today. She has turned her otherwise negative experiences into values and principals that she lives by and instills in her twelve year-old twins.

Tina maintains deep faith in the belief that all people are worthy of a second chance (a conviction her mother held and modeled throughout her life). It is a quality that makes her such a dedicated and genuine leader. Her experiences have both prepared her for her leadership position and made her a more sympathetic advocate for those who have no voices of their own. When leaving a parking garage this month, Tina said she was hugged by a woman who thanked her for saving her life.

“She said I saved her life by simply responding to a call,” Nixon said. “That’s why I do what I do.”

We are fortunate to have such a well-respected, talented and dedicated leader. The Frank Grady award reflects very positively on Tina’s accomplishments -- and the YWCA.