eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Hartford Region

A STORY OF EVOLUTION

Because you helped write the ~~his~~herstory.

2023 GRATITUDE REPORT

OUR SHARED STORY

Dear Trusted Friend,

Thank you.

Your generosity, vision and strength are beyond words. But in these pages, we hope to give you a peek at how you've helped write a new narrative of what's possible.

This is our story. Yours, ours and that of a community coming together to eliminate racism and empower women.

It's a story of connection. It's a story of deep listening and seeking to understand across differences. It's a story of integrity and caring. And this story — this community — wouldn't be the same without each and every member who's co-creating it with love.

That includes you.

No matter the size or form of your generosity, in 2023 you helped shape our future. Because of people like you, YWCA Hartford Region is proving that when we learn to trust and value one another as equals, we find the way forward together. One step at a time.

And when we take those steps with courage, compassion and kindness, things that seemed impossible suddenly become inevitable.

There is power in writing our story together. And there's nothing more inspiring to us than the opportunity to write alongside you — and together, to continue bringing that story to life.

Thank you for being part of this story of evolution.

In community,

ANDREA BARTON REEVES
Board Chair, YWCA Hartford Region

ADRIENNE W. COCHRANE, J.D.
Chief Executive Officer, YWCA Hartford Region

EARLY LEARNING CENTERS

YOU HELP OUR CHILDREN SEE THEMSELVES IN THE NARRATIVE

You can probably remember the first story you fell in love with as a child. Because stories shape our brains… and our lives.

Starting at six weeks old, parents entrust their infants to our care. They trust us to help write the very beginning of their child's life story… At a time in their development when every little bit counts.

Different books, same story

It's not just how we prepare our children for school. Or how our families get access to the high-quality childcare they deserve…We shape the future through the way we treat our children and each other.

And our mission is written into every single chapter at YWCA's four early learning centers. That's because in every single classroom diversity is the norm. And every child is celebrated and loved equally. So although the classroom lessons will differ based on age, the story is always the same: *your support helps children learn about themselves, about each other and about how they can make the world a better place*.

And that's a story we are proud to be writing with you.

"If they could see the quality of the staff and the energy and the devotion that they put into it every day, I know our donors and partners would feel proud."

TINA GLADDEN
Director of Early Learning & School Age Programs

KRUTI'S STORY UNFOLDING

"I learned that helping women of color is my passion

and my purpose at the end of the day."

YOUR SUPPORT HAS HELPED FUEL HER HOPE

She wasn't totally sure about YWCA's Young Women's Leadership Corps (YWLC) when she joined in the ninth grade. Looking back, Kruti has some advice for the next generation…

"Just take the leap of faith. And just don't doubt yourself in the process."

Now, as a student at the University of Southern California, she's taking her own advice. And running with it.

Passing it back as she moves forward
She's determined to move the needle on financial literacy for women and girls. So she's already thinking ahead.

"How am I going to help girls of color who want to go into this business world, into this finance world?" I'm in college, right? Once I get into the industry, how am I going to help girls in college? How am I going to keep on passing it back?"

In 2023, she started to put her longer-term plan into action.

Seeing herself as the leader she wanted
Kruti knew the stats going in: white men still dominate the field of finance. "And sometimes," she says, "it's hard."

"When you don't see people like you, you're like, 'Um, am I really gonna be able to work on a team with all men and be the only female? Or am I going to be able to go up against some of these men who I see talking to each other about being in the same fraternity? I don't fit into that conversation.'"

But in some ways it's made her more resolute.

Instead of looking outside herself for the change she wants to see, "[the YWLC staff] provided me with the hope that I am that person, I am that leader. And that's what they do every single day with all the young women who are in their programs."

So at YWCA's Teen Summit focusing on Financial Literacy, Kruti came back to teach young women her age and younger about the importance of financial literacy starting at an early age.

The magic in the programs is genuine care
She credits the Young Women's Leadership Corps (YWLC) for helping her understand her purpose.

"What makes YWCA so powerful," she says, "is that everyone who's involved is a part of that mission, everyone who's doing what they're doing, and pouring into these young girls is doing it because they find value in it." And it was clear to her that other girls saw it as well. That care was genuine.

Girls just wanna have hope and support
Kruti considers herself lucky. "I'm blessed to have a support system where I'm not doubting my decision. But I don't want any girl to have to doubt that decision. I want them to be proudly saying, 'I want to work in finance' at the age of 10 or 12."

And she sees that no matter a girl's career path or life circumstances, support is critical to navigating the world as a young woman.

"A lot of us girls come from different backgrounds, different walks of life, different experiences. And no matter if we are the wealthiest person, not so wealthy, no matter if you have five siblings or one, all of us need some sort of hope, some sort of support."

To Kruti, that didn't mean pouring something in from the outside. It meant cultivating what's already there.

The proof is in her unfolding story.

Her future is a triple bottom line: finance, family and making a difference for others
Kruti wants to have a family of her own and her career path will allow her to make that choice with confidence.

But she sees so much more than that. "At the end of the day," she says, "when you're working in finance, there are so many opportunities for you to help people with that money… But even more important than that, why I have this huge passion for wanting to have women in finance is because I don't really see that myself right now."

She knows how much it matters… especially for women and girls.

In high school, she did a research project that really hit home. She learned that "a lot of times women tend to stay in abusive relationships because they don't have that financial literacy."

Kruti says her biggest accomplishment would be to change that in some way. Her greatest aspiration, she says, is "that [women] are never in a state where they have to compromise themselves or anyone else because they're not financially independent."

When asked to speak to herself five years into the future, she paused.

"I have not seen tomorrow, and I don't know what tomorrow is gonna bring. But one thing I can say is, I would tell her to not give up."

Thank YOU for being part of this unfolding story.
People like you make all of our programs possible — and allow us to give the next generation of women the hope and support they need to write their own powerful narratives.

YOUR CARE IS A THROUGHLINE, AND IT TRULY ADDS UP

FINANCIAL LITERACY AS A PATHWAY TO EMPOWERMENT

Too often, you hear about cycles of poverty, of trauma. Where women don't get what they need to thrive. Where gender, race and class compound their challenges.

That story is all too real. *But **this** is not that kind of story … thanks to people like you*.

Investing in women pays dividends
We know that when women get what they need to succeed in all dimensions of their lives, it has a ripple effect. Their families, their children, their communities — and all of us — benefit. And just like you, we won't stop until we're there.

With the wrap-around support of a community of care, people and partners like you are making it possible. ***This** story is about becoming an intergenerational cycle of hope*. Because you are helping women rewrite their own narratives.

A year of digging deep
2023 was a turning point for our YW Career Women program. "Our staff felt like, 'We need to do more.' We know we did our best with the bandwidth we had," says Donna Sodipo, your YWCA Hartford Region's Chief Program Officer, "but it never felt like enough."

"And then this year, I was just like, 'We have to do it. Let's just do it.'"

DONNA SODIPO, *YWCA Hartford Region's Chief Program Officer*

That meant weaving together all the pieces. The resilience of participants, the talent of staff, the strength of partnerships, the vision of funders… and the generosity of individuals just like you.

We focused on what the women needed. Self-care. Mindful moments. We did things we'd been wanting to do for years. "We held brunch, we had guest speakers, we had a photographer do headshots, we had flowers…just a lot of little intentional touches. All the workshops had themes and affirmations built into them, so that the women would be able to take those little moments to keep them going."

And all those little touches paid off.

Partly what we did, partly how we did it
"One thing that was different is that we became a trauma-informed organization," says Donna. "It was just a true commitment from our organization to do the work."

Learning about how we've all been impacted by trauma has been somewhat surprising for everyone. "It allows you that process of slowing down to then speed up. And so, I feel like we've done more."

Healing through money matters
When we learned that we would be one of only two nonprofits selected to steward the generosity of philanthropist Charlotte Goode via The Aurora Women and Girls Foundation's Enhanced College Success Program, something clicked.

"That grant was game changing," says Donna. It provided significant scholarships to four of our YW Career Women, a level of support we've never been able to provide before.

"How can we use this opportunity to shift the mindset and relationship that people often have with money? It's usually traumatic, and how do we change that into something that's positive and healing?"

Thinking outside the piggy bank
So in 2023 we reworked all our curriculum, from our YW Career Women, our YW Leadership Corps (YWLC), and all the way down to our Early Learning Centers to include financial literacy. "So it was a through line of really lifting up practices and habits," says Donna.

In some ways, this story is only just beginning…And it's the unwavering care of people and partners like you that will allow us to see it through to its powerful ending. Thank you for inspiring evolution that's grounded in genuine care.

GROWING LOVE

STEWARDING HER GIFTS AND YOURS, SO THEY KEEP GIVING

Flowers that empower. The story began with a simple idea in 2018. And thanks to people like you, that story too, is evolving. And you might be surprised to hear how…

"A big part of it is spiritual," says Kirstin Havelevitch, the award-winning floral designer.

Kirstin is the manager of your YWCA's social enterprise, Persimmon Petals. And for her, it's not just a job. To Kirstin, it's the stewardship of gifts that allows her to make a difference. "I consider it a blessing to have a gift," she says. "It's a gift to be able to do designing, and to be able to crunch numbers and balance a budget, and to mentally and physically be able to share skills for the betterment of anyone involved."

See, this retail flower shop is working full time to eliminate racism and empower women. Because every dollar of profit goes straight back into the mission.

The 5-star reviews are speaking for themselves. And demand is soaring…

In 2023, we had nearly 800 customers…and we'd only been open a year! We owe it to you and your generosity, and to The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Thank you for writing this beginning.

This story line continues thanks to people like you. You are helping grow love.

WINNING NUMBERS

COURAGE + COMPASSION = STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY

Early Learning Centers

243

children, ages 6 weeks to 5 years, built their foundation for life-long learning success through active play, exploration and discovery.

Kidslink

256

kids had access to before-and after-school programs where working parents could rest assured that their children were learning and growing in a safe, fun space.

Shelter

72

individuals, identifying as women or non-binary, secured safety at the Emergency Shelter for Women.

In the Company of Women

1,100

people supported our signature annual event to help fuel our programs and services that advance equity for women, youth and families in the Greater Hartford community.

YW Career Women

57

working mothers received academic and career counseling in community with other women pursuing college degrees and career growth.

Soromundi

34

adults secured permanent supportive housing in a safe space and received unparalleled wrap-around services.

YW Leadership Corps

161

young women, ages 13-18, learned by doing in programs focused on leadership, advocacy, diversity and inclusion, self-empowerment and college and career exploration.

Advocacy

71

Partnerships were strengthened and we partnered with Hartford, Bloomfield and East Hartford to launch the 50/50 Campaign to further racial justice and gender equity for women, girls and families.

Financial Literacy

340

women and girls participated in programs to enhance skills and knowledge that will help them build a stronger financial future.

YOU'VE HELPED GET OUR COMMUNITY ON BOARD(S)

Maybe you've heard the phrase, "Nothing about us without us." What if that was the policy?

Well, thanks to your support, we're going to find out. Because in 2023, you helped launch a new campaign…

It's called the 50/50 Campaign. And it's 100% focused on ensuring gender equity and racial diversity on local boards and commissions.

"When the YWCA reached out to us and wanted to partner, I was all for it because I knew [firsthand] the impact that our boards and commissions have."

MAYOR MARTIN, *East Hartford*

50% making space, 50% making noise, 100% reducing barriers

As Congresswoman Chisholm said, "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." And what we know from experience is that we need to both make space for more chairs and encourage more people to bring theirs to the floor.

50% of our work is in partnership with municipalities who are committed to making space for new voices. We help them look at their policies, their processes, their challenges. And together we reduce the barriers to equitable racial and gender representation.

50% of our work is in partnership with community members who may have never considered using their voice in this way. We help them understand that they already have what it takes to make a difference, and just how much difference they can make and where. And they, in turn, help shape the next phase of the campaign.

Representation leads to transformation

We know from the research that this work makes a world of difference, including…

- Improved public accessibility
- Increased community readiness
- Enhanced quality of life

And not just for the community as a whole, but also for those who step up to serve. Thank **YOU** for stepping up to be part of this important work.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

YOUR GENEROUS HEART IS FILLING A CRUCIAL GAP

It's not a simple story. The plot line is heading in the right direction. But we're smack in the middle … where your support is critical. That's why we're so very grateful for your big heart this year.

And grateful that you've chosen to open it up to some of your neighbors who are least likely to receive that kind of love elsewhere.

We need love like yours to bend the story arc
"A lot of state resources are going to building affordable housing, which is good," says Cathy Zeiner. She's the *Chief Strategy and Operations Officer* at your YWCA, and the person who oversees our emergency shelter and housing programs. "That's the long-term solution."

But in the short term, it's a tradeoff: more state funds to build new housing means less to support the folks just struggling to meet their basic needs. And after eight years of decline, those numbers are on the rise.

Every one of our neighbors deserves to be cared for
For our neighbors with the least to begin with, the pandemic has hit the hardest. And as that population ages, their needs get more complex. "The homeless population is skewing older, and we have not as a community moved ahead to the needs of an aging population and an aging disabled population," says Cathy.

For YWCA Hartford Region, that means being creative and being persistent…

"It takes insight and it takes love," says Cathy. "And we have been working very hard to recruit staff. We've had some turnover in the last year, and been very intentional about looking for staff who deeply care about the people we serve. Not just doing the work, but who deeply care about the people themselves. The good part about that is that it's helped us be effective for some folks who have felt overlooked for years."

Your generosity matters in the ending
As we navigate the tricky middle, your compassion truly matters in how this story goes. Each and every day. "We're so grateful to our donors who give specifically to our housing programs, and who purchase things like sheets, towels, blankets and pillows, which help defray some of the costs."

Not everyone sees the full story like you
Not everyone cares enough to take action. And not everyone sees themselves as part of a community of care that helps all boats to rise.

But because you do, we can — and we will — finish rewriting the story.

This is the story of community coming together so that no one has to struggle alone. And when we come together, it means we don't have to choose. We can care for each one of our neighbors right now and advocate for more affordable housing so that fewer folks end up here in the first place.

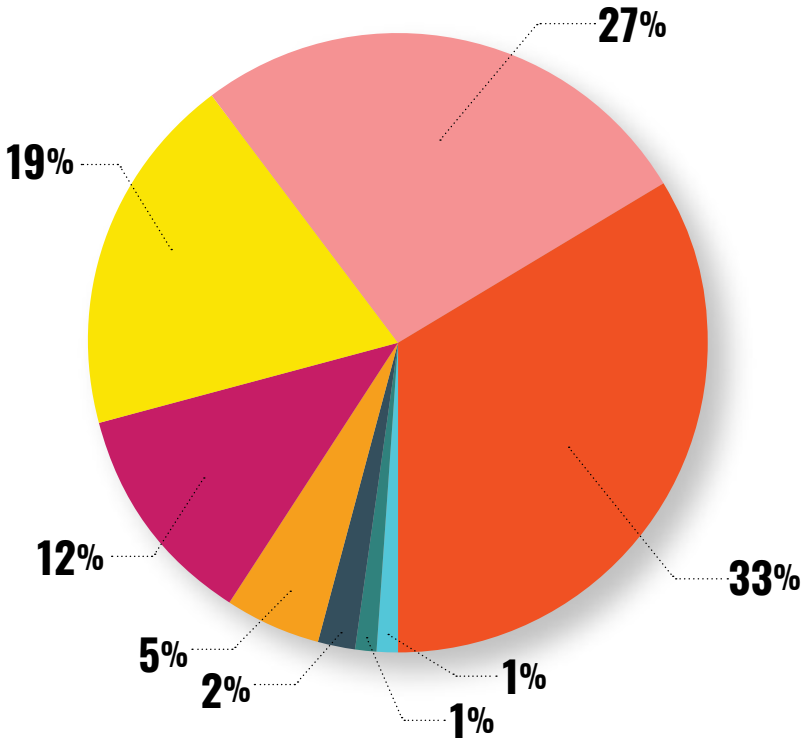
We think you'll agree with Cathy that "a home should be a place of refuge and healing." Thank you for caring enough to come together and work towards a future where that is a reality for all of our neighbors. We can't do this work without generous people and fierce advocates like you.

FISCAL YEAR 2023

FINANCIALS

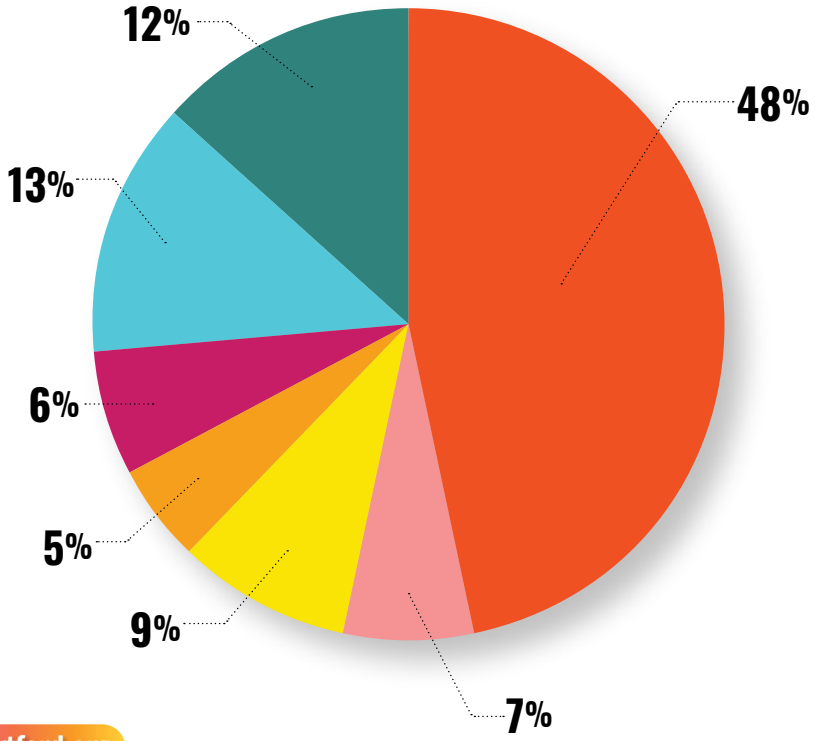
YWCA Hartford Region Revenues

Program Fees	$2,875,726
Governmental Grants	$2,276,923
Endowment Contributions	$1,670,471
Contributions & Special Events	$392,860
Non-governmental Grants	$1,032,124
United Way	$98,694
Miscellaneous Income	$93,011
Social Enterprise	$144,372
Total Revenue	**$8,584,181**



YWCA Hartford Region Expenses

Childcare Services	$4,321,588
Housing	$610,730
Women and Girls Programs	$796,083
Advocacy	$483,100
Community Facilities	$574,200
Fundraising and Marketing	$1,200,578
Management and General	$1,135,370
Total Expenses	**$9,121,649**



To see the full 2023 audited financials, visit ywcahartford.org

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Trinity Health of New England
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Union Baptist Church
United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
United Way of Connecticut 211
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University of Hartford
Upper Albany NRZ
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OUR TEAM

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Christina Gregoire, *Director*, Human Resources and Training
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Donna Sodipo, *Chief Program Officer*
Derek Stubbs, *Chief Financial Officer*
Tiffany Young, *Senior Director*, Community Engagement and Advocacy
Catherine Zeiner, *Chief Strategy and Operations Officer*

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Althea Bates, *Career Coach*
Shante Brown, *Career Coach*
Robin Bucki, *Site Manager*, Early Learning Center
Jordan Chase, *Billing Specialist*
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Ashley Coleman, *Program Coordinator*
Aries Cubilla, *Grant Writer*
Luciana DeGray, *Manager*, Housing Program
Sheona Douglas, *Program Coordinator*, Women and Girls Programs
Terry Fitzgerald, *Manager*, Advocacy and Outreach
Jenna Gaudino, *Manager*, School Age and Summer Programs
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Karol Jimenez, *Manager*, Events and Fund Raising
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Jen Madley, *Site Manager*, Early Learning Center
Vanessa McQuillar, *Manager*, Customer Service
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Lamar Wallace, *Case Manager*, Shelter/Housing
Calvin Ware, *Manager*, IT

AFTERWARD

MISS VANESSA'S WORDS OF WISDOM

41 Years and Counting on the Power of This Evolving Story

Dear Generous Reader,

We only ever gain something when we help someone else. And to me the mission of the YWCA, it means helping someone.

You never know what this life has in store for us. You can be up today and down tomorrow. We all go through things. But as long as you're treating people with respect and kindness, that's what's important.

And believe me, your kindness is important.

I'm that first face folks see when they walk in the door of our YWCA. And you would not believe how many people have told me, 'You saved me that day.'

You never know what someone is going through. Just that one kind action or word, you could be saving somebody's life.

So whatever it may be that you do to help someone else, no matter how little you may think it is — it's something.

And because we're all doing those little things, it's adding up. I've seen a lot in 41 years, and I can tell you, things are really changing.

We're here and we're gonna be a force to recognize. With the leadership that we have, and with people like you, I think we're going places, I really do.

The people who walk in our doors deserve that. They touch my heart every day.

And by being one of the people who's helping others go places, you touch my heart.

Thank you.

Yours,

Vanessa McQuillar

MISS VANESSA MCQUILLAR
Customer Service Manager
YWCA Hartford Region

eliminating racism
empowering women

ywca

Hartford Region

135 Broad Street
Hartford, CT 06105
860.525.1163
860.543.8919
ywcahartford.org

#YWCAHARTFORD

Our Mission
YWCA Hartford Region is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

Our Vision
Our vision is to become a community with unlimited opportunities to un-limit opportunity.