



YWCA Aurora

eliminating racism
empowering women

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

IN THIS ISSUE

Meeting the Mission of the YWCA

by Melissa Nigro, Executive Director

When I was young, I learned that a boy's education was placed at a higher priority than a girl's: my brother was sent to Catholic school, and I was sent to public school. This disparity was a catalyst for my educational journey. I recognize that I have privilege solely based on my skin color, and my experience is miniscule compared to the pervasive attrition people of color experience daily. Still, this effected me.

While my experience was a catalyst for me, there are those in our community who do not have the means nor the opportunity for individual growth. It is for this reason that I accepted the position of Executive Director at the YWCA Aurora. I hope to provide opportunities and influence change so the future, for some, may be better.

In the coming year, I invite you to watch my progress as I develop programs to serve the Aurora community. The YWCA Aurora will implement initiatives which include expanding the Peace Program to reach more children; creating a Community Dialogues program to increase racial awareness and create healthy progress; holding financial planning workshops to encourage healthy money management; and providing a speaker's series of inspirational discussions throughout the Aurora community.

These initiatives are aggressive and essential, and to meet them we rely on funding sources such as endowments, grants, donations, and bequests. Please let me know if you would like to become more involved in our programs by providing financial support.

While the YWCA Aurora has had challenges over the years, including losing the swimming facility, these challenges caused our organization to rethink our priorities. Along the way we forged strong friendships we treasure, including United Way, Aurora University (where we are happily now located), Mutual Ground, Aurora Cares, and Breaking Free. I plan to foster these relationships and reach out to other local organizations so that the YWCA Aurora becomes the great collaborator, and we can all provide our community with strong, necessary and helpful programs. It is through these collaborations that we can influence growth and provide stability.

One person's situation, or skin color, should not be placed above another's. Join me as I embark on this journey to create programs for those who are not provided the means nor opportunities. Stay tuned.



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Leaders of Change Luncheon

by Melissa Nigro, Executive Director

The Leaders of Change Luncheon was held on April 30, 2015 at the Gaslite Manor in Aurora, and was attended by Aurora's most influential community members. This year's Luncheon featured Keynote Speaker Lee Woodruff, the wife of ABC News Anchor Bob Woodruff, who was severely injured while on-location in Iraq by an IED (improvised explosive device) and suffered traumatic brain injury. Ms. Woodruff's journey is memorialized in her recent book "In An Instant", which she co-wrote with her husband Bob. During our luncheon, Lee told her story of perseverance and inspiration through working with her husband's life-altering injury.

Ruth Dieterich Wagner (pictured on the right) was honored with the YWCA Aurora Lifetime Achievement Award. Ms. Wagner's previous accolades include the

YWCA Aurora Woman of Distinction award in 1980, the Kiwanis Club of Aurora God & Fellow Man award in 1985, and the East Aurora High School Distinguished Alumni award in 2010. Through her lifetime of work for the underprivileged and youth, membership to the YWCA Aurora and Board Membership, Ms. Wagner truly was a woman of distinction, and an inspiration to us all. Ms. Wagner passed away on June 26, 2015. She will be greatly missed.

We hope you will join us for our upcoming Leaders of Change Luncheon scheduled on Monday, April 18, 2016 at Pipers Banquets. Our Keynote Speaker will be the honorable Dr. Bernice King, daughter of late Coretta Scott King and Dr. Martin



Luther King, Jr. Nationally and internationally known as one of the most powerful, motivating and life-changing orators and speakers on the circuit today, Dr. King leaves her audiences speechless and challenges people to raise the standard. I truly you will join us for this inspirational event.

YWCA Aurora Membership Drive



The YWCA provides Aurora residents a place to learn and to grow. Membership is now FREE, for a limited time. New members will receive a free t-shirt, and a membership card to use toward programming in 2016!

YWCA Aurora offers:

- Youth leadership and violence prevention education
- Women's empowerment programs

Membership means:

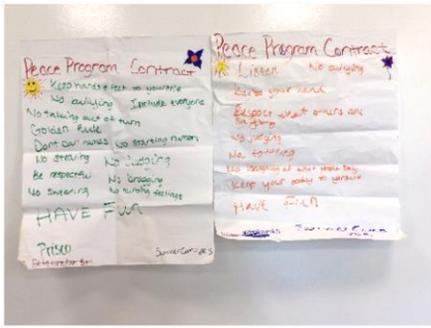
- You belong to a community where you can explore your personal and professional interests
- You are part of a growing circle of women and YWCA supporters

All members have the opportunity to:

- Receive information on YWCA programs
- Participate in YWCA programs and activities
- Belong to a network that helps members build personal and professional relationships
- Raise awareness and advocate for issues affecting women and families

Please contact Melissa Nigro today to sign up at mnigro@ywcaaurora.org or 630-299-2280.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE



Students Create Peace Contract

At the beginning of the program, students create a Peace Program Contract.



Graduates of the Peace Program

At the end of the program, students receive a Peace Program Certificate. Pictured: YMCA Celebration Center

FAST FACTS

1109 students

Participated during our first three years of the program

19% Increase

Increased participation in Year 3 compared to Year 1

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

"Because of the Peace Program the boy who bullied me is now my friend" – Student

"He thinks more about how his actions make others feel" –Parent

YWCA Aurora Peace Program

by Helane' Aghayere, Peace Program Manager

The YWCA Aurora Peace Program is in its third year of service. Our mission is to improve the academic learning environment and enhance scholastic achievement in Aurora grade schools by reducing the incidence of bullying and creating leaders. Our program uses social and emotional learning techniques that raise racial awareness and provide anti-bullying tactics to school-aged children so that situations are handled in an appropriate manner.

This bullying prevention and leadership program is based on the nationally recognized Second Step program, and designed for 3rd through 5th grade students who are potential leaders, who have low self-esteem, who are academically smart but lacking in social skills, as well as students who may have participated in bullying activities.

Since its inception in 2012, the program has served over 1,100 students, both during the school year and in summer camp sessions, reaching over 40 schools and park districts in the Aurora area. The diversity of children enrolled in the curriculum include a solid mix of girls and boys, as well as an increased inclusion of children of color.

During each 10-week program, students create a safe environment by establishing rules during their sessions, as well as a contract (see sidebar for example). Students gain insight and awareness of bullying and its negative impact, and participate in engaging activities that instill empathy and emotional coping mechanisms.

Sessions are run by three facilitators who are enrolled in college programs for social work and nursing. There are 10 sessions in the fall, 10 sessions in the

spring, and a summer camp program in collaboration at local parks.

We have received wonderful testimonies from students, teachers, executive directors and social workers on how they truly enjoy the program and what it has to offer (see Participant Comments).

The YWCA Peace Program is steadily growing while making a difference in so many students' lives. We hope to expand the curriculum by developing programming to include bullying prevention trainings for parents, teachers and social workers, as well as include 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students.



Please consider providing a monetary donation to the YWCA Aurora. Your support will help expand programming and trainings, as well as provide sustainability to this essential program for Aurora students.

SAVE THE DATE

LEADERS OF CHANGE LUNCHEON 2016

APRIL 18, 2016

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR. BERNICE KING

(DAUGHTER OF CORETTA KING & DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR)



REGISTER ONLINE AT WWW.YWCAAURORA/LEADERSOFCHANGE

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