

# YWCA aims to ‘break down barriers’

[Todd Cohen](#) | June 10, 2008

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- Over 2,000 children in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools are homeless.

Addressing the needs of families and single women who are homeless was a major focus of a capital campaign YWCA Central Carolinas recently completed that raised \$8 million, exceeding its goal by \$500,000.

Chaired by Anne Pipkin Benson, a community volunteer, the campaign generated funds to finance renovation of 66 rooms for single women at the Y's main facility, and to build 10 townhomes near Park Road Shopping Center that will serve as transitional housing for families.

The Y also will use funds from the campaign for other renovations at its main facility, and for an endowment to support upkeep of that facility and the transitional housing.

The goal of the Y's programs for homeless families and single women is to help them become financially stable and find permanent housing, says CEO Jane McIntyre.

On any given day, the Y houses over 100 homeless individuals, including women, families and children.

The townhomes, which opened April 11 on 10 acres the Y owns roughly 12 minutes from downtown and 12 minutes from South Park, can accommodate families with as many as seven or eight members who can stay up to two years.

Like the single women who live in the housing units at the Y's main facility and typically stay for 10 months, most of those families are employed but cannot afford to pay market prices for housing, McIntyre says.

In addition to housing, the Y also provides its working-poor clients with services designed to help them help themselves, or to connect them to other agencies that provide those services.

Working with a case manager who customizes a program for them, clients can learn about how to budget more carefully, improve their credit, and receive skills training for use of computers and other tasks.

Families pay roughly \$400 a month to cover housing and all services, and the Y raises funds to cover over two-thirds of the cost of programs for its working-poor clients.

Overall, the Y operates with an annual budget over \$3 million.

Of those funds, United Way of Central Carolinas contributes roughly one-third, the Y raises another third through its annual fund, and fees generate the remaining third.

The Y counts on annual-fund contributions from individuals, religious congregations, government grants, and private, family and corporate foundations.

It also hosts an annual fundraising luncheon that this year was held in February and was chaired by Angela Broome, vice president of community relations for the Charlotte region for First Citizens Bank and chair-elect of the Y.

Now, working with Karla Williams of Charlotte consulting firm The Williams Group, the Y is assessing its programs and looking for ways to strengthen or expand them to address priority needs, and possibly to raise funds to support those improvements.

And Charles Page, a consultant and former executive with United Way of Central Carolinas, is working with the Y's board to strengthen its role in the organization.

The Y, which serves roughly 400 children in after-school programs, and provides fitness programs for 1,500 members, also has developed after-school programs in 12 public housing communities.

In the Sunridge public-housing community, students from UNC-Charlotte work as volunteers.

And, with a grant from Foundation for the Carolina, the Y has launched a book club for single women living at the Y.

Working to advance its mission of "Eliminating racism, empowering women," McIntyre says, the Y aim to "help break down barriers so everyone can have access" to programs and services many people take for granted