



Dear Friends,

I'm excited to share this snapshot of the past year's accomplishments of the YWCA of the University of Illinois— a time that's challenged all of us to rethink our priorities and resources. Like many of you, our staff and board have been working virtually to help protect the health of our community, our partners, and our staff; but that hasn't stopped us from making big changes that will carry us forward with a renewed commitment to our mission to eliminate racism and empower women! So let's get started...

After 135 years at the University of Illinois, we made a key strategic decision to direct our **advocacy and service initiatives to women in the local community**. We literally took a big step towards that end by moving our headquarters from campus to an office at 2403 W. Springfield Avenue in Champaign. We can't wait to explore new opportunities for meeting, training, and organizing in this space!

In mid-2019, we were one of five local YWCAs around the country chosen to be part of a pilot program funded by Google.com and the YWCA USA.

The Strive program is a flexible curriculum of digital and essential work skills to empower women who lack access to the computer and technical support they need to succeed in a wired world and for those looking to set new life goals for employment and education. We value our collaboration with other YWCAs and our support from the community partners who help us reach out to women who most need and want programs of this type, groups like WIN Recovery, The Well Experience, Healthy Beginnings, Cunningham Township, DREAM, and others.

This year, our annual **Stand Against Racism** campaign utilized the best of social media to showcase scholars, artists, poets, public health officials, and activists who shared their perspectives and experiences of racism as a public health crisis. Our work with local, regional, and national groups that share our mission inspires us to find creative and ongoing ways to cast a wider net as **advocates and allies**. We hope you'll join us in future dialogue.

Of course, we can do very little without the support of our sustaining **100 Women** donors, our in-kind and grant-supported gifts, and our volunteers. Thank you for your commitment to the YWCA and our mission! In this short report, we hope to give you a brief glimpse into the work you make possible. Let us know if you have any questions or comments, and join us in 2022.



YWCA
IS ON A
MISSION

Laura Gerhold

Laura Gerhold, FY22 Board President

HOW DO WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

COLLABORATION IN THE COMMUNITY

"Having their own computer and internet access—that's not everything, but it's huge." (Sharon)

Our mission to dismantle racism and empower women through economic and social justice is more than a catchphrase. The Strive program is a good example of tying our values to concrete action. Community partners like Sharon, an organizer and specialist in information management and Broadband technology, have helped us grow our expertise and efficiency by identifying women most in need of help for everyday tasks such as: searching and applying for jobs that require basic computer skills; helping children with remote or in-class learning; seeking or enrolling in basic financial, medical, or business services. **Strive provides everyone with a Chromebook they keep on completing the course.** We are client-focused, scheduling classes—remotely and in person—to fit their schedules and coordinating with agencies they already know and trust.

CLIENT COMMITMENT

"I'm proud of turning my life around. Now I want to pay it forward." (Jessie)*

When Jessie* joined our **Strive** program, she faced a major crossroad: Could she put years of drug addiction, unstable housing, and incarceration behind her and set positive goals for the future?

Jessie is an example of how awesome it is when an individual commitment to empowerment intersects with community support and tangible resources. On a path to sobriety, Jessie took advantage of the YWCA's 10-week course to build digital and essential workplace skills. As her confidence in the classroom grew, she **enrolled at Parkland College, got vocational certification, and landed a full-time job**--her first ever.

**This story is true but her name has been changed to protect her confidentiality.*



Spring 2021 Cohort Self-Report



64% → 100%

"I am comfortable using Google Docs."



46% → 80%

"I am comfortable using Google Drive."

COACHING AND CONTINUTY

"When I least expected it, you were there." (Randi)*

We thought we'd lost track of Randi after her Strive course ended. She struggled with remote instruction and never spoke up, believing that some sessions weren't relevant to her. Randi needed to consider her needs and priorities on her own time. She knew that our Strive team was available to her later when she needed help with resume writing, interviewing, job searches, and networking. **Providing one-on-one support before, during, and after the Strive classes has allowed us to be realistic and responsive.** Randi is now working full-time at a nonprofit agency that meets her need for social responsibility and connection. She knows she can come back to us for regular "check-in's" and feedback.

**This story is true but her name has been changed to protect her confidentiality.*



STAND AGAINST RACISM PRESENTERS 2021

Dr. Ruby Mendenhall



Dr. Chelsea Singleton



Dr. Karen Tabb Dina



Derrius Carter



Ashanti Files



ELIMINATING RACISM

We've been busy this year lending our voices to several initiatives to disrupt racism on the local, state, and national fronts. On a visit to Capitol Hill, we promoted the Resolution Declaring **Racism a Public Health Crisis** (H.Res.344/ S.Res.172) with legislators, like Rep. Tammy Duckworth. We participated in the YWCA USA's racial justice summit, In Solidarity We Build, learning and building capacity alongside a powerful lineup of change-makers and artists. Next, we brought that advocacy home through the voices of local activists and scholars during our annual **Stand Against Racism** campaign in April 2021. Check out our Let's All Do Good app to get action alerts of the latest news!

This year's SAR campaign, **We Can't Wait**, will culminate in a variety of online, and possibly in-person, events April 28-May 2. Stay tuned!

EMPOWERING WOMEN

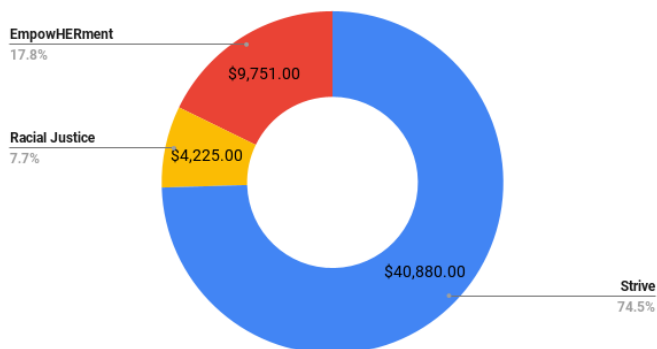
We collaborated with Parkland College to found the EmpowHERment series to empower women, women-identified individuals, and their allies, to take the next step in their careers. The series is hosted on Facebook, where we provide an empowering space where followers can find online support, learning, and networking opportunities. We encourage participants to ask questions, share challenges and triumphs, and help each other by sharing resources. Women also share their insights and experiences through online interviews and presentations.

www.facebook.com/groups/empowhermentorg

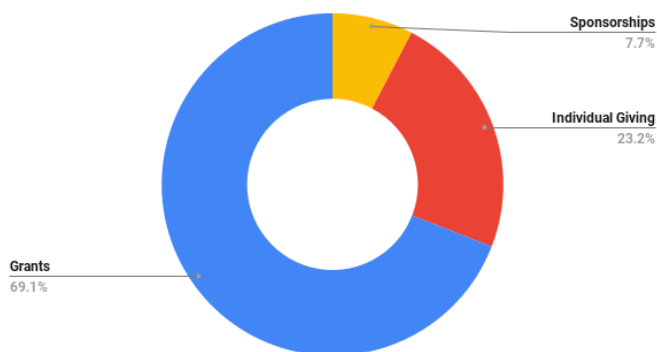
FISCAL YEAR 2021

AUG 2020 - JULY 2021

FY21 Program Expenditures \$54,856



FY22 Public Support \$79,607



THRIVING AND GROWING

While FY21 brought us many new challenges, we have much to be thankful for. Multi-year funding from **Google.org** and a generous grant from **Comcast** have allowed us to continue building programs like Strive.

Every dollar donated to the YWCA goes directly towards programming. We are especially grateful to the past women of YWCA who established and contributed to our **board-designated investments**. It is because of them that we are able to cover all of our administrative and fundraising expenses ourselves.

THANK YOU TO OUR STAND AGAINST RACISM SPONSORS!



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YWCA of the University of Illinois

2403 W Springfield Ave P-1
Champaign, IL 61821

217.344.0721 | ywcauofi.org

Our mailing address is:

PO Box 8046, Champaign, IL 61826

FY21 Staff

Andrea Rundell, Executive Director
Rebekah Rauschenberger
Kate Ross
Brandy Smith
Denise Taylor

ywcauofi



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Let's All Do Good

