

YWCA Evanston / North Shore

YWCA is committed to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Evanston/North Shore

1931 – THE CHICAGO CONNECTION

In 1931, a new branch of the Chicago YWCA was opened in Evanston, IL. The organization set out to provide safe and affordable housing for young women new to the city and looking for work. Because many of the women were from rural areas, they were also in need of instruction to improve social and domestic skills in their search for employment.

1950 – FINDING A HOME

After a few decades of moving around from various houses and buildings, a home was found for the Evanston YWCA located at 1458 Maple. This house was used as a residence for women. There were also classes in cooking, sewing, millinery and etiquette.

There were classes for immigrants to learn English, meetings for single mothers, and other activities that evolved over time at the request of the community. Women were being turned away from the residential services because there was not room. A search began for a larger property and eventually, property was purchased near the corner of Church Street and Ridge Avenue.

1969 - A NEW HOME IS ACQUIRED

The plan for the Church and Ridge property was to expand the number of residential tenants and increase the number of programs for the community. The women leading the organization at the time envisioned a broadened social service location for the women and girls of Evanston. There was a need for swimming instruction for the safety of women and girls of the area. Young women were still looking for inexpensive and safe housing options. This is a venture to continue to improve the lives and opportunities for women and girls of the community.

NCA Ground Breaking Ceremony

Sunday, September 20, 1970



ROBERT ANDERSON, RUBY MANSON, MILDRED MACDONALD, FRANK RAYMOND

1972 – RECREATION FACILITY IS ADDED

Major construction was necessary to install a large pool and gymnasium along with meeting rooms and administrative offices. The house on the property was to be offered for rent for young women. Membership of the YWCA were able to take classes like yoga and dance and learn to swim. Swim instruction was especially important for women and people of color who were traditionally excluded access to public pools.

YWCA “Helen H. Kendall Pool”



MR. AND MRS. G. PRESTON KENDALL looking at the pool dedicated to Mrs. Kendall at the Dedication Service for the new building Sunday, February 20, 1972.

1976 – WOMEN EMPOWERING WOMEN

In the 1940s and 1950s, the YWCA was full of classes and clubs designed to assist women of all races and nationalities to learn domestic duties and social skills. Programming was designed to meet the needs and desires of the community. After the successful addition of recreational pool and gym in 1972, the Board of Directors for the Evanston YWCA continually assessed the needs and desires of the community and worked to assist women with the challenges of the current day. The Board was comprised of women with a goal of providing guidance and opportunities for women and girls.

Board of Directors — 1975-1976

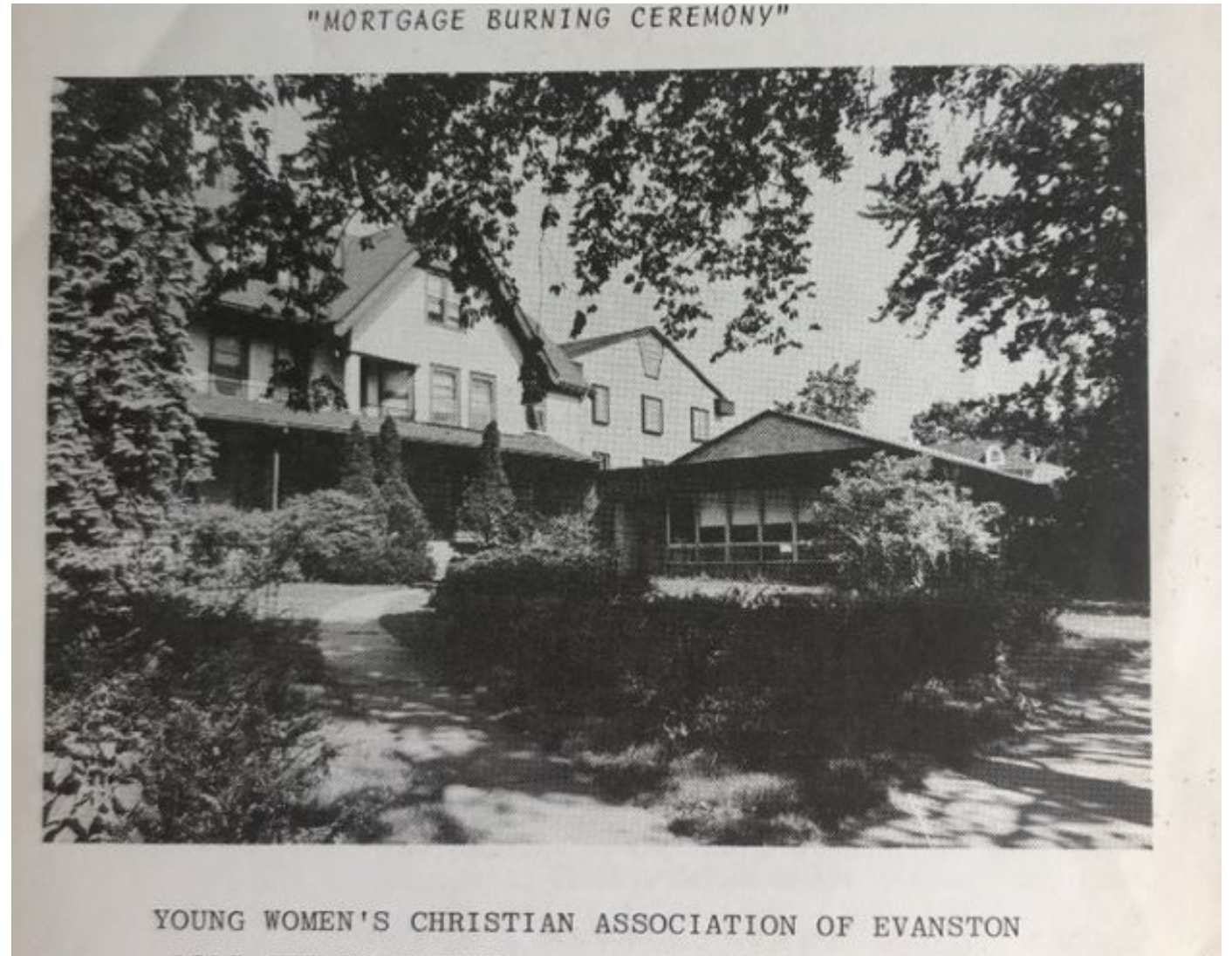


FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mesdames Lindsay Manson, Herman C. Gould, Melvin Williams, Edwin Silver, Charles MacDonald, Andrew Cooper, Jr., Hardist Lane, Robert L. Anderson, Carolyn Cocking, Ainsley Roseen, Paul Lee, Donald B. Ward, Eleanor Freeman and Anna E. Watson.

Not present at time of meeting: Mesdames Karl Berolzheimer, Helen Cromer Cooper, Horace Dawson, Sheppard Gitlis, Leza Gooden, Simon A. Roberts, Matthew Williams, Donald J. Wirth, Forrest Woodman and Honorary Members, Mrs. Warren C. Drummond and Mrs. Wayne B. Mitten.

1978 – MORTGAGE IS PAID IN FULL

Through donor participation and 3-year pledges to fund the building addition, the mortgage created to build the administrative offices, pool and gymnasium project is paid off in 1978. This larger building allows the organization to provide program support based on the requests and needs of the community. Young women rent rooms in the house as they work in local businesses, make friends, and find roommates to rent an apartment on their own. During this time, the YWCA is receiving calls from women who are being assaulted in their homes. A need to shelter victims of domestic violence is becoming apparent.



1981 – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS FIND SHELTER

As in all communities, the needs of women in Evanston are constantly changing. It is becoming increasingly noticeable that the house would better serve the population as an emergency shelter for women and child victims of domestic violence. Working with the Evanston Junior League, the house at 1215 Ridge Ave transforms its 14 rental rooms to an emergency shelter available for victims of domestic violence. A 24-hour crisis line was initiated on the site in 1982. Callers could get information on services, support and referrals to other agencies.



1986 – SHELTERING HUNDREDS

The new domestic violence shelter starts out with 5 beds for domestic violence victims and one staff member dedicated to the care and counseling of these women. By 1986, there were 30 beds available to domestic violence survivors and 14 paid members of staff. Throughout 1985 and 1986, the YWCA provides counseling and housing to 405 women and children. There are 560 calls answered from the 24-hr crisis line. The crisis line began to be handled by paid staff in 1984. Callers are able to get answers to questions about domestic violence laws. The staff offers service referrals to callers and screens applicants for the shelter. Bilingual support is available as well.



2018 – THE NEED FOR SHELTER CONTINUES TO GROW

For nearly 30 years, YWCA Evanston North Shore has utilized the house purchased in 1969 as a domestic violence shelter. Thousands of women and children have walked the floors and slept in the beds provided. The house has, indeed, provided shelter for those in need. Over the decades the service area has spread from Evanston north to Glencoe and west to the Tristate Tollway. This expansion has created a need for renovation and more importantly, more room. A new Family Support Center was envisioned to meet the needs of the larger community.



2019 – PROGRAM EXPANSION PLANNED

Working with local architects and builders, a larger building was designed to provide more rooms for the domestic violence shelter and workforce training spaces to help women develop skills to improve financial stability for themselves and their families. There are spaces dedicated to the financial education of women in English and Spanish with ample space to convene and consult on our Equity work in eliminating racism.

In short, we now have more space and expanded programs to pursue our mission; **YWCA Evanston/North Shore is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.**



2020 – SHELTER EXPANSION

In December of 2020 the original house was deconstructed to make room for a new entrance to the YWCA Evanston/North Shore. The domestic violence shelter was relocated to the north side of the large pool and now provides secure access to the shelter independent of the portions of the building used for administration and recreation.

The residents of the shelter have access to all the services provided by the YWCA but also have the privacy necessary to heal from the trauma of domestic violence. The new shelter has space for individual counseling as well as congregation points dedicated to adults, teens and children.



2022 – THE FUTURE BEGINS

In 2022 the new shelter opened for residents. The new shelter has 23 rooms and can house up to 66 people. The average length of stay in the domestic violence shelter is 90 days for nearly 150 women and children over the course of a year. The children's room offers therapeutic play space for children to work with counselors to heal from their trauma. The commercial-grade kitchen in the shelter is a space for hands-on training in culinary arts for participants in the YWCA Evanston/North Shore workforce development program. Community outreach has increased through the development of teen violence prevention training and certified adult 40-hour domestic hour training. The expansion of the YWCA Evanston/North Shore allows for a concentrated pursuit of the mission by providing empowerment opportunities for women and girls.

