

# yw words

eliminating racism  
empowering women

**ywca**

St. Paul

For Friends, Members and the Greater St. Paul Community

Winter 2014-2015

## a legacy of leadership

### Street Named in Honor of YW Board President



**YWCA Chief Executive Officer Billy Collins (left) congratulates Board President Debbie Montgomery, who was recently recognized with a proclamation naming a street in her honor.**

Paying tribute to her decades of civil rights leadership and service to the community, a section of Marshall Avenue has been named in honor of YWCA Board President, Debbie Montgomery. In November, an official proclamation pronounced Marshall Avenue between Lexington Parkway and Western Avenue will now be known as “Debbie Montgomery Avenue.”

A longtime social justice advocate, Montgomery served as president of the Saint Paul NAACP youth group in the 1950s and, at age 17, became the youngest person ever elected to the NAACP’s national board of directors.

In 1975, she joined the Saint Paul Police Department as the city’s first female officer. During her 28 years on the force, she worked her way up the ranks, ultimately serving as senior commander. Later in her career, she was elected to the City Council—where she focused on issues including economic development, mixed-income housing and opportunities for youth.

In addition to fighting for equality locally, Montgomery also blazed trails for civil rights on the national level. She participated in Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 1963 March on Washington and also the 54-mile march in Alabama that led to the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Montgomery’s commitment to social justice continues today. Last year, she received the Heritage Award from the International Association of Women Police in recognition of her contributions to female police work worldwide.

The YWCA is thrilled to celebrate Montgomery’s legacy of leadership. She exemplifies our mission and is a passionate advocate for the women, children and families we serve.

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# within our walls

## A Glimpse at Programming and Happenings



*Generous community support made a trip to the corn maze and pumpkin patch possible for families in our Transitional Housing Program (THP).*



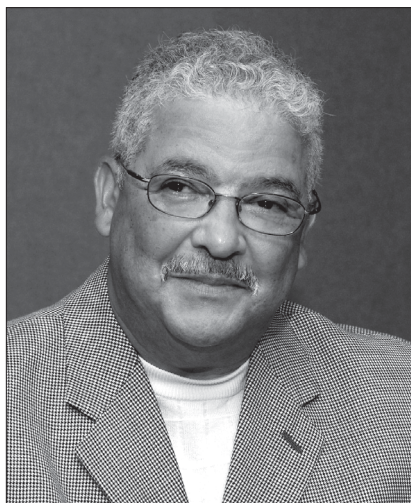
*Giving Trees located in our Health & Fitness Center are decorated with wish lists from families in need. Gifts will be collected through December 12.*



*With training from Transit for Livable Communities, our Housing & Supportive Services staff are now better equipped to help families access a wide array of transportation options throughout the metro.*

# giving thanks

## Donor Thank-a-thon Reaches Out



*Chief Executive Officer, William L. Collins, Jr.*

The phone lines at the YWCA were extra busy on October 14 as our Board of Directors took to the phones. No, it wasn't a crisis or a pledge drive; we were simply calling to say, "thank you." Although we can't possibly call every person who makes a difference for the women, children and families we serve in just one night — every year we make a list and set out to thank as many as possible.

If you didn't receive a call this year or elected not to pick up, I just want to take the opportunity to thank you for your support. Whether you volunteered, donated holiday gifts for families in need or made a financial contribution to help cover program expenses — you made a profound difference.

Although you may never meet the people you have helped, I can tell you they are touched and grateful for your support. In the words of one participant, "Thank you for your generosity. I never dreamed that someone who had never met us, could care so much for me and my son."

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the YWCA St. Paul, thank you for reaching out to the families we serve. With your support, we helped more than 5,700 people to change their lives for the better during 2013. Together, I know we will accomplish great things in the year ahead.

Happy Holidays to you and yours!

*William L. Collins Jr.*



# home for the holidays

## Your Support Changes Lives

The holidays will be extra special for Ihesha and her daughter Mai'la this year. With help from the YWCA, Ihesha found not only steady employment, but also the opportunity to build a better life for her family. For the first time, she's enjoying benefits like health insurance and paid time off, but even more importantly – she's doubled her income!

Ihesha's hard work means that this winter, she and Mai'la will celebrate the holidays in a place they can call their own. "I love it!" she exclaims. "It's a two-bedroom apartment and we're so excited to finally have our own space!"

With support from people like you, Ihesha's dreams are coming true. Now that she sees more possibilities for herself, she's determined to help Mai'la to set ambitious goals too. "I want her to look up to me and know that she can do anything she wants to do," she says.

Your gift during the holidays will help even more families like Ihesha's to change their lives. Whether donating online, making a planned gift or setting up automated contributions via your checking account, your donation will mean homes for the homeless, jobs for the unemployed and brighter, healthier futures for youth.

To make a contribution, visit us online at <http://bit.ly/ywdonate> or call 651-222-3741.



*This season, you can make dreams come true for families like Ihesha's.*

# opening doors to opportunity

## Job Seekers to Ring in New Year with New Credential

While many people are planning resolutions to lose weight, stop smoking or pay off debt—a group of local job seekers will start 2015 better equipped to move into the workforce. Since July, the YWCA St. Paul has been helping low-income Ramsey County residents to earn their General Educational Development (GED) certificates.

The project serves recipients of the Minnesota Family Investment Program by preparing them to obtain their certificate by the end of the year. "Without a high school diploma, a lot of doors are closed to you," explains Tom Ellis, Director of Workforce Development. "A GED opens the door to wider educational and employment opportunities."

In addition to expanding options for the future, the credential can also greatly impact earning potential. On average, those with a high school diploma or GED earn 30 percent more each year than their less-educated peers.

To help more learners earn their credentials, the YWCA is working in collaboration with the Ronald M. Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning to facilitate trainings, tutoring sessions and practice tests. The YWCA is also providing incentives to participants as they work toward program completion.

One participant can't wait to finish the program so she can set an example for her children. "I want to get my GED and prepare to go to college to make a better life for my family," she said.

**This project was made possible thanks to funding from Ramsey County Workforce Solutions.**



*With help from the YWCA St. Paul, job seekers can earn a GED.*

# celebrating success

## Staying on the Right Track

At 15, Rakeem was in crisis. Battling the effects of early childhood trauma, years in foster care and a dissolved adoption, he faced a return to the foster care system. His life changed when he was reunited with his biological brother and welcomed into his home.

Together, they began the work of helping Rakeem to stabilize his life and chart a course for the future. At the YWCA St. Paul, they found a community who not only believed in Rakeem's potential, but was ready to help him meet his goals.



*Rakeem, IMPACT Participant*

Participating in the IMPACT program has helped Rakeem to create new friendships, learn new skills, and explore options for his future. Looking back, he's proud of the changes he's made and thankful IMPACT has helped him to stay in school and on a positive path. "I swear, I was a hot mess," he explains. "The young man [I am] now is less vulnerable and less angry, and more in control."

With ongoing support, Rakeem earned his diploma and is now enrolled at St. Paul College. As he transitions to adulthood, he knows the YWCA will be there to help him navigate. "You know me," he says. "I'm not perfect at anything yet but I'm working towards it."

# wrapping up cheer

## Join Us for Holiday Wrapping Party



*At the 2012 Wrapping Party, YWCA members and friends wrapped 500 gifts for families fighting homelessness.*

This year's Wrapping Party will be Saturday, December 13 from 10 am to noon. To RSVP, please visit <http://bit.ly/wrappingparty14> or contact Emily Richardson at 651-265-0792.

Would you like to help bring cheer to families in need this holiday season? Join us for the Holiday Wrapping Party on Saturday, December 13 and we'll put your nimble fingers to good use as we wrap more than 500 gifts donated for families in need!

For weeks, the "elves" have been busily working to make holiday wishes come true. Generous members, donors and friends have provided holiday gifts and financial support to ensure there is something special under the tree for every family enrolled in YWCA Housing & Supportive Services Programs.

"With amazing community support, we are able to make the holidays brighter for families fighting homelessness," explains Jaime Stampley, Director of Housing & Supportive Services. "It's wonderful to experience the generosity and see people come together to ensure families who are struggling, know the community cares."

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

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St. Paul



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