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Official Bulletin of the West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association, Inc.

March 15, 2008

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SPECIAL EDITION: FIRST ANNUAL VOLUNTEER PROJECT

WEST VIRGINIA NURSERY & LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES VOLUNTEER PROJECT FOR YWCA SOJOURNER'S SHELTER FOR HOMELESS

(From a February 29 press release from YWCA Sojourner's Shelter)

Green space, play area, picnic spot and more will be created at YWCA Sojourner's Shelter for Homeless Women & Families in West Virginia's State Capitol. While the project is still in the concept stage, the West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association (WVNLA) announced on February 28, 2008 that the group is going to make a dream come true for the YWCA Sojourner's Shelter this summer. In January, the 100-member association voted to donate an 'extreme makeover' project to a deserving group in lieu of its annual summer meeting. YWCA Sojourner's Shelter was selected from a review of many candidates and WVNLA's announcement to create a green space, play area, picnic spot and more at the East End location was greeted with great enthusiasm.

YWCA Sojourner's Program Director Margaret Taylor calls the WVNLA gift "a blessing for our Sojourner's family". By creating this recreation area, "WVNLA is giving the gift of joy to the parents at Sojourner's and giving the gift of fresh air and exercise to all of our children", she said.

Cary Levenson, president of the WVNLA and owner of Valley Gardens in Charleston, says, "WVNLA's members are pleased to provide the funding, design, materials and labor for this project for YWCA Sojourner's. It's a good way to share our expertise and our resources for a worthy cause".



Above: WVNLA President Cary Levenson unveils the preliminary plan for the YWCA Sojourner's Shelter project at the WVNLA Press Conference at the Shelter on February 28, 2008. See enlargement of the plan in the centerfold.



Above: Photography crew from Digital Vision Works, Dunbar, WV, with owner Marc Adams standing to the right of the cameraman, covering the WVNLA Press Conference at YWCA Sojourner's Shelter for Homeless Women & Families. The current Shelter children's playground is in the background.

At right: The Sojourner's Shelter staff put up this sign to express their gratitude to WVNLA at the Press Conference.



Below: Sojourner's Shelter Program Director Margaret Taylor, Charleston Deputy Mayor Rod Blackstone, and YWCA Charleston Executive Director Debby Weinstein listen as WVNLA President Cary Levenson talks about the proposed green space project. Behind them is the neighboring vacant lot included in the project.



**Speech by WVNLA President Cary Levenson
at the WV Nursery & Landscape Association (WVNLA)
Press Conference
at YWCA Sojourner's Shelter
for Homeless Women & Children
Thursday, February 28, 2:00 pm**

Thank you. It is an honor to be here representing the West Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association. From Morgantown to Huntington to Princeton, we're over 100 members strong. In lieu of our annual summer meeting we decided to do something different. We wanted to give back to the communities in which we live, to enhance and improve the lives of others. Simply put, to make their world a better place.

After reviewing several projects, we selected Sojourners Homeless Shelter because it met our criteria, being non-profit and their mission represents the values that we seek. But it was the involvement of children that clinched our decision.

Most children today have a yard in which to run and play and be children. Some may have a swing-set, a sandbox, or even a basketball hoop, but most importantly, a safe and secure place. Unfortunately for the kids that reside here, this has been only a dream, a dream to have their own backyard, a dream for mothers who can watch their children at play and know that they are out of harm's way – a dream that provides green spaces that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also functional for everyone that lives here, a dream that meets the needs of this facility. We're going to make that dream come true. And here's how we're going to do it:

We are planning a game court to be separated to allow for older play and open viewing. There will be play structures, located next to the gathering space so parents can watch their children play and have conversations with peers. We plan to provide a welcoming entrance with seating areas and a center planting area for a symbolic piece of sculpture and seasonal plantings. There will be an outdoor dining plaza to be located off the cafeteria with access through new doors. Our plan also includes greenery to screen the walls and dumpster areas.



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ATTENTION: All Members of WVNLA

Become a Partner In Project! Join other members of the WVNLA in building this project for the YWCA Sojourner's Shelter for Homeless. You may help support this project by providing labor, materials and/or equipment and also please let us know if you know others who may be willing to assist us in donations of labor, equipment and/or materials. Your support will help ensure the success of this project. If willing to assist please contact the local management committee as follows:

Bill Mills 304-925-4754, Email: terrasalisgarden@aol.com

Becky Morris 304-755-0581, Email: riversidesod@citynet.net

Cary Levenson 304-342-2255, Email: vgiofc@aol.com”

◆ President: Cary Levenson 304/342-2255 ◆ Vice President: Brett Merritt 304/762-2290 ◆
◆ Treasurer: Mark Springer 304/523-8491 ◆ Secretary: Pat Biafore 304/594-3006 ◆ Executive Director: Brad Bearce ◆
◆ Telephone: 1-800-239-0796 ◆ Email: wvnla@prodigy.net ◆ FAX: 304/292-2488 ◆
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ywca

charleston, wv

1114 Quarrier Street
Charleston, WV 25301

Phone (304) 340-3594
Fax (304) 340-3614
www.ywcahaswv.org

Sojourner's Shelter
for Homeless Women & Families
(304) 340-3553

Resolve Family Abuse Program
(304) 340-3554
(800) 681-8663 (crisis line)

Alicia McCormick Homes
for Battered & Homeless
Women & Children
(304) 415-2682

**Elder Abuse Initiative &
The Shanklin Center**
for Senior Enrichment
(304) 415-2682

Child Enrichment Center
(304) 340-3560

Health Promotion Services
(304) 340-3550

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**AGENDA WV Nursery & Landscape Association (WVNLA)
Press Conference
at YWCA Sojourner's Shelter
for Homeless Women & Families**

**Thursday, Feb. 28 – 2 pm
(green space, play area and picnic spot to be created)**

- 2:00 pm Welcome- Debby Weinstein, YWCA Executive Director
(acknowledges Rod Blackstone – Deputy Mayor)
(introduces Margaret Taylor)**
- 2:02 pm Remarks from Margaret Taylor, Program Director,
YWCA Sojourner's Shelter for
Homeless Women & Families
(introduces Cary Levenson, President of the WV
Nursery & Landscape Association –WVNLA)**
- 2:05 pm Remarks from Cary Levenson, President of the West
Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association, Inc.
- presents rendering of proposed green space project
- DVDs of art available for print and TV media**
- 2:10 Closing remarks from Debby Weinstein
(acknowledge City of Charleston)
- Invitation to all to enjoy cookies and coffee and
- talk with WVNLA reps and YWCA reps**
- 2:13 Outdoor event concludes; interviews begin;
photographs of rendering; distribution of DVDs**

Interviews/contacts for more information: (all area code 304)

- Cary Levenson, President, WVNLA – 539-6400
- Margaret Taylor, Program Dir. YWCA Sojourner's Shelter - 340-3553
- Debby Weinstein, Executive Dir., YWCA of Charleston, WV – 340-3555
- Rod Blackstone, Deputy Mayor, City of Charleston, WV – 348-8174

Also in attendance from WVNLA: VP Brett Merritt; Treasurer Mark Springer; Past-President Norman Cole, III; Executive Director Bradford Bearce, and Board of Directors Officers Becky Morris and Bill Mills. (Morris, Mills and Levenson are the project team managers)

#

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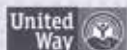
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United Way of
Central West Virginia

January 28, 2008

West Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association
C/o Becky Morris
10 Stewart Orchard
Winfield, WV 25213

Dear Friends,

Attached you will find a fact sheet about the YWCA Sojourners Shelter for Homeless Women and Families, located at 1418-1420 Washington Street East in Charleston, WV. As you can see, this important community program provides far more than emergency shelter for women, children and families who find themselves homeless in Kanawha, Clay and Boone Counties (our catchment area). The goal of this program is to help the residents attain the skills and knowledge needed to permanently break out of the debilitating cycle of homelessness, which can have such devastating effects on children as well as the adults. Due to the plethora of education and job readiness skills we provide to the adults, as well as the myriad of other services that we provide to the adults and children, Sojourners typically has a recidivism rate (return to shelter rate) in the course of the year that hovers at only 5%!

The YWCA is also committed to providing as much of a home environment (and as least an institutional feeling) for our residents as possible. There are 22 bedrooms in the shelter and all families stay in their own room. There is a children's playroom, and a children's learning lab, replete with computers, books galore and more. There is an adult lounge, and our cafeteria serves as a multipurpose room.

Room on the outside of the building is limited though. We have a small playground for the children and a tiny concrete patio for the adults. This can be difficult, given that we have living at the shelter an average 65 individuals at any point in time, which includes approximately 25 children. We were fortunate in 2003 though, to acquire a 27 X 135 lot contiguous to the eastern property line of the Sojourners Shelter. There had been a long abandoned building on that lot, which was accidentally set on fire by 2 homeless men living in that building as they tried to keep warm in the winter of 2000. (As an aside, the building the building caught fire in the middle of the night, and it jumped to the roof of our Shelter, causing us to have to evacuate our shelter in the middle of that cold winter night....a story for another time!) After the building was demolished, the YWCA worked diligently with the owners of the property in an effort to solicit their donation of the lot to the YWCA of Charleston for use at Sojourners, given that the lot was too small, according to City Code to rebuild on there. In 2003, the lot was donated to the YWCA.

While we have dreamed of creating more usable outdoor space for our residents, there has been no unrestricted available dollars to make that dream a reality. The property is about 8 inches below the grade of the Sojourners Shelter property. Recently, a company donated what we thought was going to be fill dirt for the lot, but it ended up having a good deal of concrete in it, making it dangerous now for the children to play in. The City of Charleston kindly fenced off the North part of the property, due to the constant use of the lot as a “cut through” to Washington by local drug dealers. There is so much though, that could be done with the lot, to further enhance the quality of life for the homeless women and children who have no choice but to temporarily call the Sojourners Shelter, “home”.

Our dream is to make this lot SAFE, (completely fenced off), and to create a warm and inviting space for homeless children and adults to enjoy the outdoors, while living at Sojourners Shelter. The YWCA would be very grateful to the WV Nursery and Landscape Association if you would consider taking on this project.

Please feel free to call me, at 340-3555, or Margaret Taylor, the YWCA Sojourners Shelter Director at 340-3553, with any question that you may have. Thank you all for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely

**Debby Weinstein, Executive Director
YWCA of Charleston**

CC: Margaret Taylor

**Executive Director, YWCA Charleston,
Debby Weinstein and Program Director,
YWCA Sojourner’s Shelter, Margaret
Taylor at the WVNLA Press Conference at
the Shelter on February 28, 2008.**



ywca sojourner's shelter for homeless women and families

overview

The YWCA Sojourner's Shelter for Homeless Women and Families remains fully committed to its mission of providing a wholesome, safe, healthy environment and promoting self-sufficiency to those in need. Services are provided to homeless single women, women with children, men with custody of their children and intact families. Embracing a philosophy of empowering each individual, the ultimate goal of Sojourner's many comprehensive services is to ensure that individuals achieve long-term self-sufficiency in order to prevent future homelessness - and it's working! In the 2006 - 2007 fiscal year, Sojourner's maintained a recidivism rate of only 5% (individuals returning to facility), which is well below the national average.

we provide

- Crisis intervention and case management services
- Referral services to link clients to community agencies
- Outreach services for both residents and non-residents
- Supportive counseling (substance abuse and mental health)
- Housing, relocation, and transportation
- Pre- and post-natal counseling and referrals
- Children's educational and enrichment programs, including computer classes, art classes, tutoring, drug-free education, supportive counseling, and field trips.
- Education and Job Readiness Center, assisting participants through the education and career decision-making process. Some aspects of the program include job skills, GED preparation, computer classes, money management, self-esteem building, and more.



2006-2007 program highlights

Provided services to **332** homeless children, including a wide variety of educational and recreational activities

Provided services to **284** single females with children and **308** single females without children

Provided services to **92** couples with children and **80** couples without children

Provided services to **15** men with custody of their children

Served an average of **64** people nightly in the 75-bed facility

Provided **4,648** case management/counseling hours

Provided **81,626** nutritious meals

Provided **19,849** shelter nights

Provided **4,638** hours of service and support through **449** volunteers

96% of residents found and maintained housing beyond six months

65% of program participants gained meaningful employment

81% of program participants moved to a higher educational level

506 individuals participated in the educational program, were tested, and received classroom instruction

274 individuals improved their computer skills

35 participants entered college or vocational school



Pictures are of the vacant lot described in YWCA Charleston Executive Director Debby Weinstein's letter to Becky Morris of the WVNLA (see letter elsewhere in this newsletter) and of the heap of soil and concrete chunks dumped in the lot. The concrete will have to be removed and lot level filled to grade prior to installing the landscape of the Gathering Space and Play Ground (see plan in centerfold). As part of the project, doors will be installed in the wall of the Sojourner's Shelter building (at right) to provide access to and visibility of the Gathering Space from the dining/activities room. (Pictures courtesy of Margaret Taylor, Program Director, YWCA Sojourner's Shelter)





Above: Charleston Deputy Mayor Rod Blackstone expresses his gratitude for the YWCA Sojourner's Shelter project at the Press Conference on February 28, 2008. From left to right are YWCA Charleston Executive Director Debby Weinstein, YWCA Sojourner's Shelter Program Director Margaret Taylor, an unidentified attendee, Deputy Mayor Blackstone and WV Nursery & Landscape Association President Cary Levenson.

Below: WVNLA Board of Directors attending the Press Conference. From left to right: President Cary Levenson, Valley Gardens, Charleston; Past President Norman Cole III, Cole Nurseries, Pipestem; Treasurer Mark Springer, Lavalette Nursery & Garden Center, Huntington; Director Becky Morris, Riverside Sod Farm, Winfield; Vice President Brett Merritt, G & G Nursery, Lesage; and Director Bill Mills, TerraSalis, Charleston. Cary Levenson, Bill Mills and Becky Morris are the local project team for WVNLA.

