



## Housing & Shelter Services

# MONTHLY NEWS & UPDATES

MAY 2025

## YMCA Housing and Shelter Services: 170 Years of Impact



The YMCA of Central Ohio is dedicated to addressing housing insecurity, understanding that safe, stable, and affordable housing is essential for well-being. Since 2014, the Van Buren Center has provided emergency shelter to individuals and families in crisis, continuing a long-standing commitment to supporting those facing homelessness.

The organization's housing programs have deep historical roots. In 1924, the historic Downtown YMCA began offering temporary housing to soldiers and newcomers to the city, assisting over 100,000 individuals over the years. This legacy laid the foundation for the housing initiatives in place today.

In 1997, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) was introduced to support individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, combining affordable housing with on-site support services. In 2017, the Rapid Re-Housing Program was launched to help individuals and families quickly transition into stable, permanent housing. These initiatives remain central to YMCA Housing and Shelter Services.

When the Downtown YMCA closed in 2022, 122 residents were successfully relocated into stable housing. This included the opening of two new affordable housing communities: Touchstone Field Place, offering 56 one-bedroom apartments in 2023, and McKinley Manor, providing 44 units for individuals aged 55 and older, which opened in 2024.

### **So, what is Permanent Supportive Housing?**

Permanent Supportive Housing is a proven, evidence-based solution that

combines safe, affordable housing with essential support services for individuals facing chronic homelessness, often due to mental illness, physical disabilities, or substance use disorders. Unlike temporary shelters, PSH offers long-term stability and the supportive services people need to rebuild their lives and thrive.

### Why does it matter?

Because it works. We have to understand that individuals living in permanent supportive housing units were homeless for a year or more and have a diagnosed disability; they need long-term residency for stability and support. Communities that invest in Permanent Supportive Housing see:

- Significant reductions in homelessness
- Fewer emergency room visits and hospital stays
- Lower use of crisis services, including jails and shelters
- Healthier, safer, and more connected neighborhoods

The services and support offered at the Van Buren Center lay the foundation for individuals like Carolyn Ford to find a stable, safe place to call home. After more than 20 years of experiencing homelessness and living in shelters, a referral from the YMCA of Central Ohio helped Carolyn secure her first apartment at Touchstone Field Place.

Earlier this year, *The Columbus Dispatch* shared Carolyn's journey, highlighting the life-changing impact of Permanent Supportive Housing for individuals facing homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges. [\[Read the full story here\]](#).



The YMCA of Central Ohio provides case management and ongoing program support at Touchstone Field Place, McKinley Manor, and Franklin Station, helping guide residents on a path toward lasting stability and independence.



Franklin Station



Touchstone Field Place



McKinley Manor

[Donate Today](#)

---

**Growing Together: Community Gardens at Van Buren, McKinley Manor and Touchstone**



True healing and stability thrive when individuals not only have a safe place to call home but also have meaningful opportunities to connect, contribute, and grow. That's why we have established community gardens at our emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing programs.

These gardens are more than just green spaces; they are places of transformation. For many of our guests and residents, the simple act of planting a seed and watching it grow is deeply symbolic. It serves as a reminder that they, too, can heal, flourish, and reclaim their independence. Gardening fosters a sense of routine, purpose, and ownership, all of which are essential for long-term stability.



This is the first year for the McKinley Manor community garden. Residents have been working hard to assemble the new garden beds and to plant seeds.



Touchstone Field Place is beginning its second growing season. Thanks to the support of the Community Housing Network, residents now have access to green space.



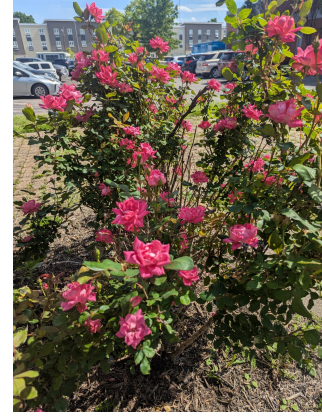
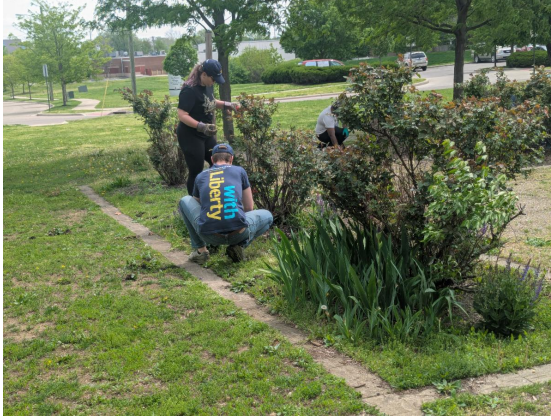
### Volunteering in the Van Buren Garden

This month, our amazing volunteers helped revitalize our shelter's community garden by planting fresh herbs and vegetables, pulling weeds, and turning the soil. Their efforts transformed the garden into a source of nourishment and peace for our residents, symbolizing healing and hope.

**Thank you to Liberty Mutual, Ohio Health, and OSU Patient Experience for volunteering this month to support the Van Buren Community Garden!**



Liberty Mutual volunteers pruned, watered, and nurtured the garden's rose beds, which had long needed extra attention; they are now thriving and beautiful!



## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

### Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast

May 11th: Coalition for the Homeless



**On Mother's Day, the Van Buren Center partnered with Kathleen Buchen-Barbara, Janet Forrest, and their team, with the support of the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless, to host a pancake breakfast at the shelter, celebrating the strength and resilience of moms in our community.**

The morning was filled with warmth, from golden pancakes provided by Katie's Pancakes to smiles shared over coffee, orange juice, and turkey sausage. The real highlight was the sense of togetherness.

Each mother received fresh flowers — a simple gesture to show, "You are seen. You are valued." Volunteers distributed gift bags with self-care items, reminding every woman that she matters and is never alone. A crafting table allowed children to create cards and art, filling the room with laughter and conversation.

This event was more than a breakfast; it was a moment of connection and joy. We are deeply grateful to the volunteers and donors who made this day memorable. As one mom shared, "I didn't expect anything today, and then I walked in and felt like someone actually thought about me. That means more



than I can say.”

To all mothers in our community — whether in shelter, transitioning, or facing challenges — we see you, honor you, and stand with you.



---

## Mosaic High School Students

### April-May: Capstone Project



**This spring, we had the pleasure of welcoming a group of high school student interns from the Mosaic Program to Van Buren Center, and what an incredible impact they made!**

As part of their internship, the students learned about the vital services and programs we offer to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. From emergency shelter and case management to food services and

family support programs, they gained first-hand insight into the challenges our community faces and the many ways we work to provide hope and stability.

But they didn't stop at learning — they got involved.

Our student interns jumped right in to help in meaningful, hands-on ways. They rolled up their sleeves in our community garden, helping to care for plants and prepare garden beds for spring. They assisted in sorting and organizing donations, ensuring that clothing, hygiene items, and household essentials were ready for those who needed them most. And they played an important role in our Easter celebration for families, helping set up activities, prepare goodie bags, and bring smiles to children's faces.

We're so proud of these young leaders for showing compassion, initiative, and a true spirit of service. Their time with us not only supported our daily operations but also reminded us how powerful youth engagement can be.

---

## Family Birthday Party 1st Anniversary

### May 23rd: Brandi N. Milbry Foundation



**This month marks a very special milestone — the one-year anniversary of our monthly birthday celebrations for children at the shelter, made possible by the incredible generosity and dedication of the Brandi N. Milbry Foundation!**

For the past year, the Foundation has brought joy, laughter, and unforgettable memories to children experiencing homelessness by hosting beautiful birthday parties right here at the Van Buren Center. Complete with decorations, sweet treats, games, and thoughtful gifts, these celebrations remind every child that they are special, loved, and never forgotten — no matter their circumstances.

Since 2020, the Brandi N. Milbry Foundation has been providing birthday gifts to children in our shelter, ensuring that each child's special day is recognized and celebrated. Their unwavering commitment has brought joy to countless young faces and offered comfort to families who might not otherwise be able to celebrate these milestones. We are deeply grateful to the Brandi N. Milbry Foundation for its continued partnership and for the kindness, compassion, and care it demonstrates month after month.

[Learn More](#)

## Hygiene Kit Drive

### Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish



**We are deeply grateful to the members of Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish for their generous donation of hygiene kits to the Van Buren Center!**

Thanks to their kindness and thoughtful efforts, dozens of individuals and families now have access to essential items like soap, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, and more — things many of us take for granted, but that make a world of difference for those experiencing homelessness. These hygiene kits help our guests feel cared for, seen, and respected during difficult times.

Thank you to everyone at Immaculate Heart Parish for living out your faith through action and compassion. Your support brings real hope to our community.

### **Van Buren Volunteer Opportunities**

#### **Meal Prep**

Available 7 days a week  
2:00 pm-4:00 pm

#### **Dinner Service**

Available 7 days a week  
5:00 pm-7:00 pm

*The minimum age requirement for all volunteer opportunities is 14 years old.*

**Meal  
Prep**

**Dinner Service**

### **Van Buren Donation Needs**

- Baby wipes - URGENT
- Travel-size body wash
- Travel-size shampoo & conditioner
- Deodorant
- Sunscreen lotion
- Women's shoes (size 6-8)

For more information about our current donation needs, email Katrina Martin at [katrina.martin@ymcacolumbus.org](mailto:katrina.martin@ymcacolumbus.org).

**Click Here - Amazon Wish List**

### **Invest In Your Community**

Your gift today transforms lives and strengthens communities. 100% of contributions to



our Annual Campaign support providing access to opportunities for all. An investment in the YMCA of Central Ohio goes beyond the Van Buren Center emergency shelter; it's an investment in your community.

**Donate Today**

**Volunteer & Donation Hub**



Share This Email



Share This Email



Share This Email

YMCA of Central Ohio Shelter Services | 595 Van Buren Dr. | Columbus, OH 43223 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!