



Housing & Shelter Services

MONTHLY NEWS & UPDATES

JUNE 2025

Helping Kids Start Strong: Van Buren Center's Back-to-School Rally 2025 Kickoff



As the new school year approaches, we are eagerly preparing for our annual Back-to-School Rally — a transformative event dedicated to equipping families currently staying at the Van Buren Center with the essential school supplies and support they need to thrive and excel in the coming school year.

How You Can Make a Difference

We Need Your Support to Make This Event a Success!

- **Volunteer:** Help set up, organize supply distributions, assist families during the event, and create a welcoming atmosphere. *There are various shifts available throughout the day, as well as opportunities to help both inside and outside.*

- **Donate School Items:** Kids' sneakers, underwear, and socks, as well as reusable water bottles and lunchboxes* — every item counts! **We kindly request that all items donated for the event be new and in their original packaging.*
- **Provide Food & Refreshments:** Support our cookout by donating food, drinks, or snacks.
- **Sponsor Entertainment & Fun:** Help make this event memorable and fun for the kids by sponsoring our bounce house, face painting, balloon artist, cotton candy and slushie supplies, or games and prizes. *Your monetary donations help us purchase supplies and fund additional resources for families.*

Families staying in our shelter are working hard to support their children's education while navigating challenging circumstances. Your generous support gives these children the resources they need to overcome challenges and create a better future. Together, we can bring hope and make a positive change in their lives.

Event Details

Date: Friday, August 15th

Time: 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Location: Van Buren Center
595 Van Buren Drive, Columbus, OH 43223

Get Involved Today!

To learn more about how you can help support this year's Back-to-School Rally, connect with the Van Buren Center Programming Team.

Contact Us: 614-689-2020 ext. 8380

Email: vbvolunteer@ymcacolumbus.org

Visit: [Van Buren Volunteer & Donation Hub](#)

Click on the links below to access this year's volunteer sign-up or visit our Amazon Wish List to learn more about our supply needs.

[Volunteer Sign-Up](#)

[Back-to-School Amazon Wish List](#)



[Download Flyer](#)

Maximizing Accessibility To Housing: James' Story

When James moved into the YMCA's



Permanent Supportive Housing program in December 2022, he was rebuilding his life after cancer left him weighing just 88 pounds. At the Y, he found more than shelter — he found a supportive community.

"The guys here helped me when I was down," James said. "They made sure I ate, got out of bed, kept my clothes washed. That meant a lot."

After living at the Y's temporary housing site, James became one of the first residents at **McKinley Manor**, a newly built supportive housing complex. Surrounded by sunlight, houseplants, and his favorite sports memorabilia, James began to thrive — not just as a

tenant, but as a leader.

He joined the **Resident Advisory Board**, a group of residents who meet monthly with YMCA staff to improve life and foster connection at McKinley Manor. He's even hosted a community cookout for his 66th birthday, personally funding the event and bringing in his son to give free haircuts.

"I want it to feel like family," he said.

James is now working with his case manager, Miss Jessica, toward his next goal: a home big enough for all his grandkids. But no matter where life takes him, he knows one thing for sure:

"This place saved my life. I'm grateful every single morning I wake up."

That's why the YMCA works to maximize accessibility to housing and shelter: because all people deserve a safe, stable home.

[Donate Today](#)



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Columbus REALTORS Brings Compassion and Hard Work to Life on Annual Care Day 2025



On a day filled with teamwork, generosity, and purpose, **more than 170 volunteers from Columbus REALTORS** came



together for their annual **Care Day**, making a meaningful impact at the Van Buren Center through an incredible range of service projects and donations.

Throughout the day, volunteers rolled up their sleeves and tackled an ambitious list of improvements and contributions. They revitalized our community garden by weeding, mulching, and rebuilding garden beds. A brand-new shed was

constructed on-site to provide much-needed storage for garden tools, ensuring our green spaces remain sustainable and well-maintained for the long term.

The playground also got a makeover, with volunteers completing a fresh coat of paint on the playground fence and applying new mulch to make the area safer and more inviting for children.

Inside the shelter, the energy and care continued. Volunteers assembled **111 Welcome Home Baskets**, which are given to individuals and families who successfully secure permanent housing, offering them a warm, supportive start in their new homes. Additionally, they put together **100 Snack Bag** kits to provide quick and accessible nourishment for those in need.

Other essential tasks included organizing donated clothing, preparing diaper and wipe kits for families, portioning shampoo and conditioner into individual containers, and assisting in our kitchen to help prepare meals for residents.

Throughout the day, volunteers also had the opportunity to take guided tours of the shelter. These tours gave them a deeper understanding of the wide range of services and support we offer—from case management and employment services to meals, youth programming, and on-site medical care and referrals. It was a powerful way for volunteers to connect their service with the lived experiences of the individuals and families we serve.

Each project, no matter how big or small, was completed with a sense of purpose and unity. Columbus REALTORS demonstrated not only their commitment to our community but also the power of what can be accomplished when people come together with hearts ready to serve.

We are deeply grateful for their time, energy, and dedication, and we look forward to welcoming them back next year!





Playground Before.



Playground After!

AHF & BLACC Rock the Block



In a heartwarming show of community and care, **AHF & BLACC** hosted a vibrant family cookout at the Van Buren Center, creating an afternoon full of joy, laughter, and meaningful support. Families enjoyed dancing, games, face painting, and delicious food —**360 hot dogs and hamburgers were served!** In addition to the fun, the event offered onsite mobile testing, with **72 individuals tested.**

AHF & BLACC also provided a special lunch for our single adult women at the shelter, ensuring everyone felt seen and supported. We're grateful for their dedication and the positive impact they brought to our community.



Current Van Buren Volunteer & Donation Needs

Meal Prep

Available 5 days a week
2:00 pm-4:00 pm

Dinner Service

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

Meal
Prep

Dinner Service

- Women's Belts (*new or gently used*)
- Women's Sneakers Size 6 - 9 1/2 (*new or gently used*)
- Travel-Size Body Wash
- Bar Soap
- Baby Wipes
- Sunscreen Lotion

Amazon Wish
List

For more information about our available volunteer and donation opportunities, email Katrina Martin, Volunteer Coordinator for the Van Buren Center at katrina.martin@ymcacolumbus.org.

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 Housing & Shelter Services | 595 Van Buren Dr. | Columbus, OH 43223 US

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



Try email marketing for free today!