

# Living

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BRUCE CRIPPEN/The Post

The YWCA's Charlene Ventura, Francie Garber Pepper and Terisa Milholland in the building that will become a shelter.

## For victims, haven within sight

By Camilla Warrick  
Post staff reporter

The YWCA of Cincinnati keeps struggling to reverse a cruel statistic: Every 15 seconds a woman is harmed — somehow — by a partner, boyfriend or spouse.

The YW tried to fight back when it opened the Alice Paul House, one of the first emergency shelters in the country. That was 20 years ago. The agency also started a hotline, designed an intervention program for men, opened a similar shelter in Clermont County and recently initiated a leaflet campaign.

Now the agency is well into a project to create a bigger, better sanctuary for abused women and their children. When this place — its location remains a secret — opens in January, three times as many moms and kids will have a place to flee.

How many?

Well, about 45 to 60. "The people

### About the problem

■ **The Alice Paul** shelter and Women Helping Women Inc. together received nearly 21,000 domestic violence calls in 1996.

■ **There were** 5,998 arrests in connection with domestic violence in Hamilton County last year.

■ **Domestic violence** cases make up 30 to 40 percent of municipal court judges' dockets.

■ **University Hospital** annually intervenes in about 500 cases a year.

who come to the shelter are only the most desperate, the ones most likely to be killed," said Francie Garber Pepper, a YW board member.

Ms. Pepper, along with former vice mayor Marian Spencer and attorney Patricia Mann Smitson, is about nine

months into a campaign to raise \$4.6 million for renovating the YW's downtown headquarters and for turning a former mansion into a highly secured, temporary home.

Built in 1900 for a wealthy family, then overhauled in 1984 by a local company, the building seems nearly perfect, says Terisa Milholland, the Y's protection-from-abuse director. "It's almost as if it were built for us."

Maybe that's because you could live in grandeur at the turn of the century without a master bath the size of the kitchen or a sitting area included in the master suite. What is large about this brick mansion are the common spaces — the living room, the dining room, the glittery foyer and the parlor.

All will convert easily to meet the needs of many little families linked by a similar agony. YW executive director Charlene Ventura is excited

Please see HAVEN, 3B

about the parlor, which will become a sort of computer-library-meeting room.

Ms. Milholland is excited about the "classroom," a former work area in the back, where children can be home-schooled while they're in shelter. This will include a quiet corner for reading, a bank of computers, a crafts area and an adjacent outdoor play area.

Ms. Pepper is pleased that the house has so many bedrooms (11 will be the final count), each spacious, with high ceilings and

big windows. All women see potential in the huge industrial kitchen that will be installed in the basement. They're hoping this can be used for a small food packaging business to give residents work experience.

At the same time the YW retools the mansion, it will turn the old Alice Paul House into a transitional living center and improve an existing one. But again, these are really for "desperate" women — the kind of women memorialized by the Junior League in its "Silent Witness" exhibit of lifesize plywood figures.

The figures stand in the foyer of the new shelter, reminding workers of the real people they will never get to help. Such Cincinnati-area women as:

■ **Ginger Campbell**, 23, the mother of a 3-year-old daughter, fatally shot by a former fiance.

■ **Tonya Eastin**, 20 and pregnant, the mother of a 1-year-old son, fatally shot by her boyfriend.

■ **Sherry Greer**, 39, stalked and killed by a man who considered himself her boyfriend.

But even with expanded and improved facilities, the YW's

staff and board recognize these places are only a part of the solution. They need to reach other women, in less explosive situations, and let them know how to protect themselves, how to leave and where to seek help.

That's why they've placed 100,000 brochures ("Domestic Violence Safety Plan") in bathroom stalls in any school, church or business that will accept them.

For more information about obtaining brochures, 241-7090. To reach the YW's 24-hour crisis hotline, 241-2757.

# METRO

EDITOR: DAVID A. WELLS, 768-8600; FAX, 768-8340

SATURDAY • JUNE 28, 1997



**KRISTA RAMSEY**

## YWCA needs investment in sisterhood

In 1929, the women of Cincinnati gave a new meaning to the term homemakers.

They made a home all right, but this one was for themselves.

In a day when a dollar was a respectable half-day's wage, the women raised \$1 million to build the 12-story YWCA that still stands at the corner of Ninth and Walnut streets.

Back then, it featured fudge kitchens and sewing and singing parlours — the definition of "home" to hundreds of hopeful young women who left the countryside to seek employment in the city.

Today, it is a different kind of home for Cincinnati women and girls. A home for the spirit as much as the body. A place to find skills, support and hope.

Just as it sounds, the YWCA is a place caught between two realities. The reality of what Cincinnati women sought to build in 1929, and what Cincinnati women need in 1997. Today a new building campaign is under way, and a new set of "homemakers" seeks to raise \$1 million.

The YWCA board of directors is completing a \$4.6 million campaign that will

establish a new shelter for battered women and their children, renovate a day care center, and expand treatment programs for men who batter.

It will more

than double the occupancy rate of the Y's shelter, the only one for women in Hamilton County. It will mean longer and better child care so that mothers can train for jobs. It will mean space and resources to deal with the roots of domestic violence.

A place of safety, opportunity and education — that is what "home" looks like for women in 1997.

And, of course, it is what the city's foremothers wanted for females in 1929.

Today's Y leaders look back at those women often, to marvel at their persistence and ingenuity.

### Raised more than money

Their \$1 million was raised by women, for women and, most remarkably, *from* women. At a time when relatively few women were employed outside the home, and fewer still controlled the family finances, the Y leaders challenged women to think of themselves as philanthropists.

The women sold aprons for \$1. They scheduled small social events as fund-raisers. They got up the nerve to talk to their husbands about finances, to claim part of their own money as, indeed, their own.

And so they raised more than money. They raised pride, awareness and not least of all their voices. And they built more than a building. They built self-sufficiency. They built sisterhood.

It still stands. It all still stands.

The YWCA of Cincinnati is calling on women today. There is still \$1 million to raise for the capital campaign. The Y wants it to come from females.

They want it to come from paychecks from women who now have the chance for education and advancement. From family finances that women now see as rightfully partly their own.

And they want it to come from whence it has always come. From the hearts of compassionate women who have always known they were their sister's keeper.

In some ways, it is more of a challenge than in 1929.

### Claim money as their own

As much as they have advanced in other ways, women have not made great strides in philanthropy. Though females make up 42 percent of all chief financial officers and 60 percent of all program staff of charitable foundations, still only 5 percent of charitable dollars go to women's and girls' causes, according to the national organization Women and Philanthropy.

Women give freely, but they often don't give to women's causes. Perhaps they still have a hard time claiming money as their own. Perhaps they don't understand the sense of pride and unity it gives to build something by and for women.

Here's that chance for local women.

Send a message of support and hope to the women of Cincinnati, from the women of Cincinnati. From investment clubs and Brownie troops. From lawyers' groups and librarians' groups. From mothers, daughters and grandmothers.

And always from sisters, for we are all, every one of us, one of them.

*Krista Ramsey's column appears on Saturdays. Write her at 312 Elm St., Cincinnati 45202 or fax at 768-8340.*

### Donations

To contribute, make checks payable to the YWCA, 898 Walnut St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45202, or call 241-7090.

## Inside:

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- ▶ Maureen Dowd: The smaller meaning of 'Seinfeld.'
- ▶ Cal Thomas: The monstrous meaning of Marilyn Manson.

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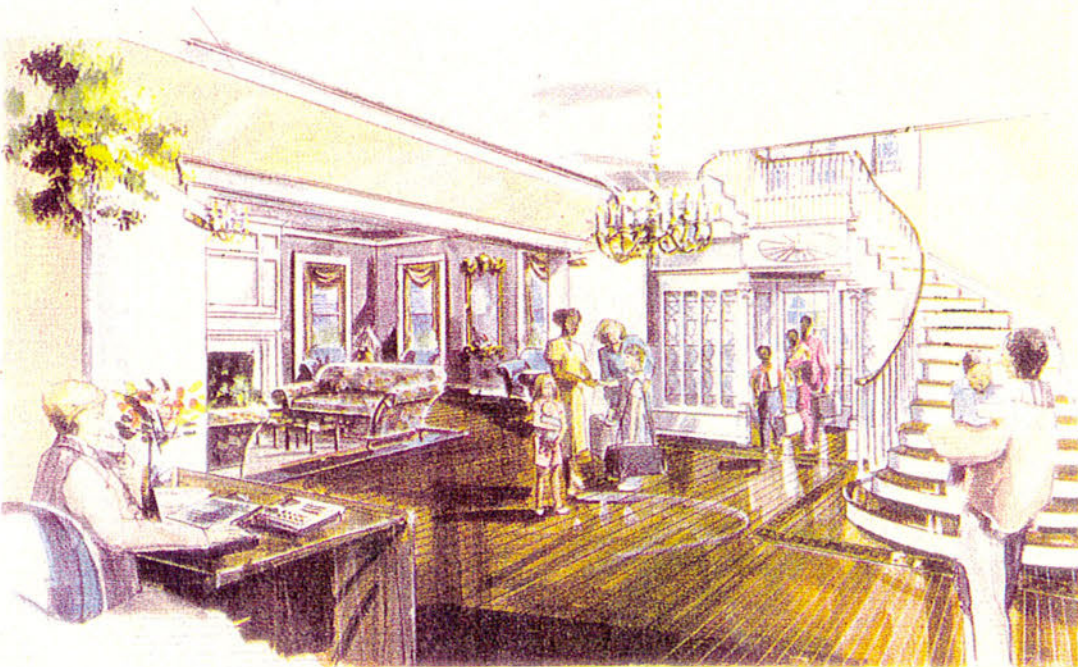
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EDITOR: PETER BRONSON, 768-8301

SUNDAY • MAY 18, 1997

**YWCA's new shelter  
 for victims of family violence  
 shows how far Cincinnati  
 has come on a once-taboo issue**

# A safe place



This is an artist's rendering of the new YWCA shelter for battered women and their children. This is the entrance, office and living space, with bedrooms, a kitchen, and space for children on several floors. It's a home that will be renovated into the shelter.

Drawing courtesy KZF Inc./YWCA

It's hardly a typical monument — an old home in a secret location. But it represents two extremes of Cincinnati: the dark side of family life and the bright side of a community trying to help.

The spacious old house soon will be converted to a new emergency shelter for women and their children who flee abusive homes. It will have room for 45 to 60 people at a time, more than double the size of the old shelter, which is the only emergency refuge in Hamilton County and one of three in the region.

The new shelter will be built with \$4.6 million being raised by the Cincinnati YWCA. The donations also will renovate the YWCA's 68-year-old downtown headquarters to add a licensed day-care center and space for programs like AMEND, the pioneering project that treats battering men.

This is a remarkable change for Cincinnati. Twenty-five years ago, nobody spoke publicly, and rarely in private, about family violence. Then some women broke the silence. The YWCA and Women Helping Women invited them to tell their stories to stunned officials.

One woman, Carla, took her two children and fled her suburban home and a spouse who beat her. She lived with her kids in her car for four days, moving the car every day so her husband wouldn't find her and nobody she knew would know. She had no family here and was too ashamed to seek aid from her friends.

Today, Carla would find help in Cincinnati. The first shelter for battered women in Hamilton County opened 19 years ago. Now there's a network of hot lines, court advocacy, counseling for men and women, public education, protection orders, stronger laws, and doctors, nurses, prosecutors and judges who are trained to deal with family violence.

There's something else remarkable: The YWCA has already raised more than \$3.5 million of its \$4.6 million capital goal. The money comes from corporations, foundations, busi-



LINDA CAGNETTI

nesses, all kinds of women's and religious groups and individuals. Even five years ago, the request would have drawn a chilly to lukewarm response. Domestic violence was still a family secret. Some still believe that "domestic" crime is less serious than street crime, and that battered women volunteer for it or provoke it and deserve what they get. Kids simply get caught in the crossfire.

Then came O.J. Simpson, and the TV images of Nicole Simpson's bruised face and frantic 911 call for help. The Simpson trial did for family violence what Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas did for sexual harassment or MADD did for drunk driving. It planted the issue solidly in the public's living room and psyche.

It opened eyes that used to glaze over at the mention of domestic violence. It opened purses, too. The widespread positive response to the YWCA campaign shows how far the public has come on this once-taboo topic.

Bud Rodenberg of Western Hills read about the YWCA in the newspaper and decided a donation was the fitting memorial for his wife, Anne Xonia Rodenberg, who died in 1995. This year on Mother's Day, others made donations in the name of mothers and daughters and friends. The Rev. Wayne Davis of Bethel Baptist Church pledged \$1 for every member of his congregation. The Junior League, Links, the Women's Alliance of the Academy of Medicine, the Sisters of Charity and other women's groups have stepped up with help.

"We hope the last \$1 million will come from hundreds of individuals whose small or large donations will make them and the whole community the owners of the shelter and these programs," said Charlene Ventura, YWCA executive director. Credit for the campaign's early success goes to the relentless, high-powered campaign team of Francie Pepper, Marian Spencer, Trish Mann Smitson, Jeane Goings and Ms. Ventura.

"There's no more important need in the county than ... services for victims of domestic violence," said Judge Timothy Black, whose Hamilton County Municipal Court docket is jammed with such cases. "Many people need help."

There are some 1,500 shelters in the country. The three in this area have waiting lists of 10 to 15 families at a time. Most women stay 15 to 30 days and are helped to find housing

and other resources.

In Greater Cincinnati, family violence accounts for one-third of all calls to which police respond. Crisis hot lines field 30,000 calls a year. Some 700 women and children receive YWCA emergency and transitional shelter each year.

Stronger laws help fight family violence, but so do the attitudes and policies of everyone involved — judges, police, prosecutors, probation officers, lawyers, business persons, clergy, teachers, medical professionals, advocates and ordinary folks like you and me.

Together, we can give Cincinnati something more valuable than stadiums or exclusive stores. A simple shelter and the help system surrounding it send the message that this community intends to see that women and children are able to live free from bodily harm. It's one of our family values — and nothing could be more valued than basic safety.

Shelters were never meant to be permanent. But they save some lives and give many women and children time and help to start over. My dream is that they'll eventually go out of business.

But for now, we still need them in Hamilton County. Last year, nine Tristate women, six children and one man were killed in domestic violence.

This is not only a women's problem. Children are victims. Men lose their jobs or go to jail. It costs the public millions of dollars for police, courts, emergency care, jail, reduced productivity, and more.

Our city's important challenge is to have good, strong, safe families. How we view and deal with the hurting ones is a gauge of how humane and civil a place this is to live.



Photo courtesy YWCA

YWCA campaign team, left to right: Francie G. Pepper, Marian Spencer, Charlene Ventura, P. Jeane Goings, Trish Mann Smitson.

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## How you can help

Everybody can do something to counter family violence. How can one person appropriately help another? Here's some advice from the experts:

▶ Realize that a woman and children living in an abusive situation have a very complicated life. As you're able, let her know that you know or believe that she is being subjected to something she shouldn't have to put up with and that you're afraid for her safety. Give her information about a place where she can talk to someone.

▶ Know what's available. Call any of these 24-hour hot lines: 241-2757, 421-LIFE (5433), 381-5610, or 221-HELP (4357).

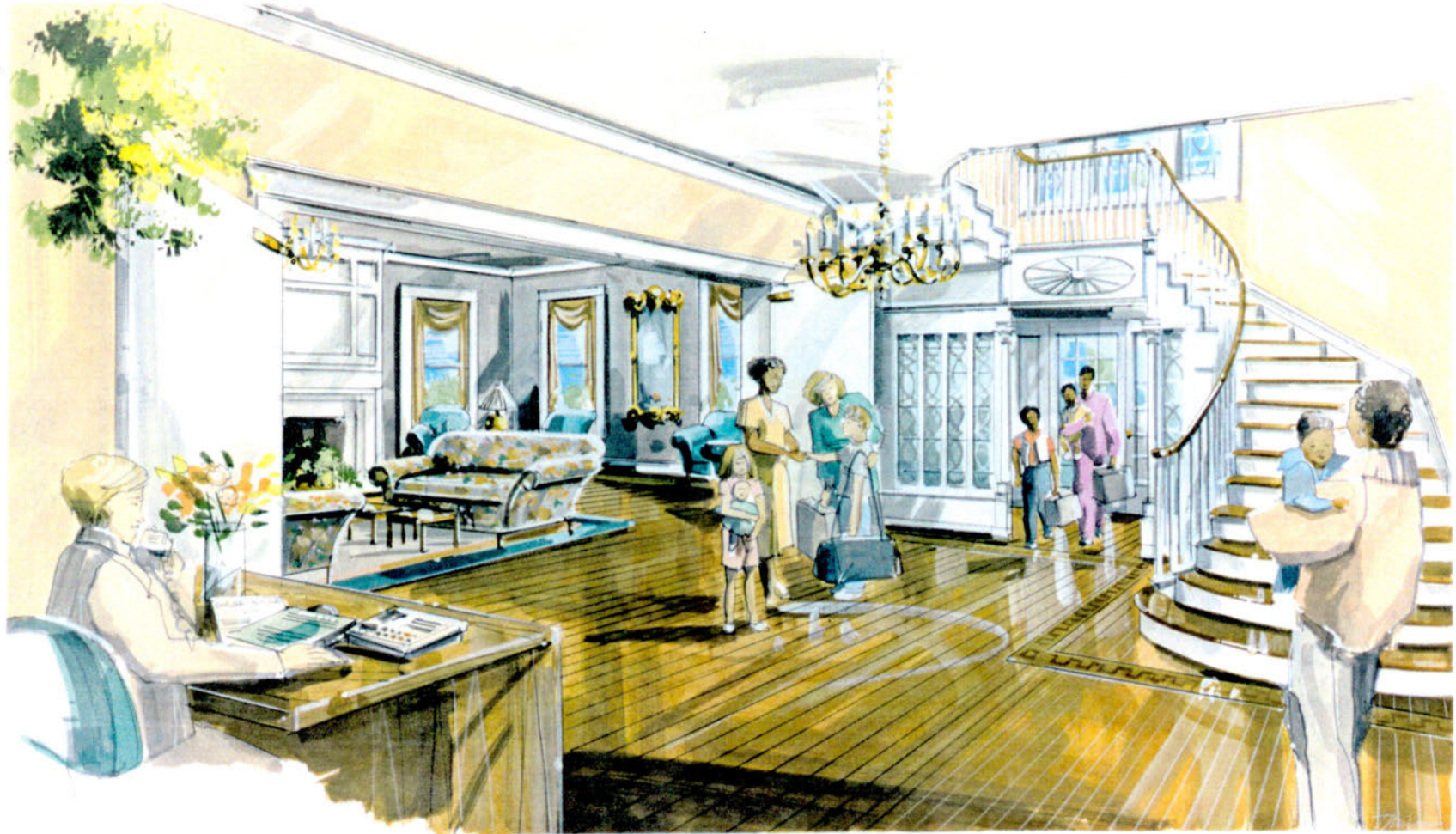
▶ Get a copy of a new brochure called "Domestic Violence Safety Plan." Sponsored by a host of local groups, it is being distributed widely. Call 281-4816 for copies.

▶ If you see cases where you believe judges or law enforcement are too lenient with abusers, ask them why. Hold them accountable.

▶ Donate to the YWCA's capital campaign and find out more about its services for women and families. Call 241-7090 or write to the YWCA of Cincinnati, 898 Walnut St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

*YWCA BATTERED WOMEN'S SHELTER*

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*Proposed Foyer and Living Room  
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