
YWCA'S COMMUNITY CAFÉ & RESOURCE CENTER

By Joyelle Tedeschi

In August 2007, the YWCA embarked on an endeavor to open the doors of the building located at 224 Gibson St., in the Broadway-Fillmore District of Buffalo's lower east side. As a graduate student from the University at Buffalo (with an MSW Community Concentration) and with experience working in the field, I was eager to be a part of such an exciting project.

The Broadway-Fillmore community suffers from poverty and isolation, yet is home to one of Buffalo's most culturally and historically treasured neighborhoods. I value deeply my own connection with the neighborhood. My father grew up there and met my mother at the local dance hall that now houses the Matt Urban Center. It is the home of The Broadway Market and the location of St. Stanislaus, where I celebrate Dyngus Day every year with my father. My attachment to the neighborhood gives me a special motivation to fight the poverty in this community.

Since August 2007, the YWCA has made strides toward the opening of the Café, while never losing sight of our mission to empower. The first step in the program development was to ask residents what their community needed. Once the needs-assessments were completed, the programs were laid out and returned to the residents for their approval. The result of the discussion with the members of the community was the objective of the Community Café. The title of the Café itself conveys the importance of the community, both in residents' involvement with development, as well as the needs the Café will serve.

The Café will be a one-stop shop for residents in a neighborhood isolated from mainstream services. The needs-assessment revealed residents did not have knowledge of all resources available to them. Even the resources they did know about were inaccessible due to a lack of transportation. (This came as no surprise, as HAWNY reported the same obstacle in their PRISM report.)



Community Café & Resource Center

The YWCA will provide case management to ensure residents have access to mainstream benefits. The Café will provide a safe and confidential meeting place for outside outreach agencies to link up with residents. There will be ongoing workshops educating the residents on available resources, such as home ownership, asset-building and employment resources. The Café will serve a free evening meal, restaurant style, to the families and residents of the neighborhood.

Once plans were finalized for the Café, funding for the project became a priority. The response to the Café from businesses and politicians has been positive, although we are still in need of securing substantial funding for the opening of the Café. The residents of the community have also been involved in this stage. Area residents have volunteered to bake and sell goods to pay for building repair and start up costs.

Even during the search for funding, the YWCA has been able to begin assisting residents to access available resources by providing resource outreach services twice a week, at Response to Love and The Broadway Market. This has been a small, but effective, step in assisting this community to gain access to the resources they so desperately need.

Statistics From the Broadway-Fillmore Area Home to the Community Cafe

- 45.9% of residents live below poverty
- 44.2% of Families live below poverty
- 64.5% of Female Head of Household live below poverty

**For donations or sponsorships
Supporting The Community Café &
Resource Center Contact Joyelle
Tedeschi at 716-852-6120 x121**