

our voice

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

volume 3.4 summer 2010 southeastern massachusetts

ywca extols the life and legacy of dr. dorothy irene height

Reprinted communication from YWCA USA CEO, Dr. Lorraine Cole



Dr. Dorothy I. Height fought against race and gender prejudice her whole life – starting from the age of 12, when Dorothy demanded to speak to the manager after being denied entrance to a swimming pool because of the color of her skin. Since then, Height went on to participate in virtually all of the major civil rights events from the 1950s through the 1980s, to be a leader within the YWCA and the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), and to create and run programs that help millions of people around the world.

After earning her bachelor's and master's degrees from New York University, Height

immediately started working on civil rights issues, serving as an organizer and eventually Vice President of the United Christian Youth Movement of North America. This work led her to the YWCA, where she spent the next 40 years, working her way up from Assistant Executive Director of the Harlem YWCA to the Executive Director of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA in Washington D.C. and finally to the staff of the YWCA National Board where she worked from 1944 to 1977.

Height played a major role in helping shape the YWCA's focus on racial and social justice issues. During the 1946 YWCA convention, she fought to ensure integration of YWCA facilities nationwide. She became Director of the newly created Center for Racial Justice at the YWCA in 1965, and at the organization's 1970 convention, worked to establish a core imperative of the YWCA mission – the elimination of racism.

She also worked with Mary McLeod Bethune at the NCNW, fighting for equal employment, pay and education for women. She served as NCNW's president from 1957 to 1998, helping organize "Wednesdays in Mississippi," which worked to open communication between women of different races; creating programs to address housing, teen parenting, and hunger issues; and establishing the Black Family Reunion Celebration in 1986. She served as Chair Emeritus of NCNW, going to work every day, until shortly before her 98th birthday.

Height was at the forefront of every major civil rights event of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, including working with Martin Luther King, Jr., to plan the 1963 March on Washington – the only woman to help plan the march. She has been an advisor to administrations from Roosevelt to Obama, and has received 36 honorary degrees from universities and colleges. Height was

awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1994 by President Clinton and the Congressional Gold Medal in 2004, the two highest civilian honors.

The highest honor bestowed by the YWCA is named for Dorothy Height and is presented to individuals whose efforts and contributions have been significant in the field of racial justice and have also had a national impact. In 2009, in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of YWCA in the United States, Height was a recipient of the YWCA Fearless Leader Award.

YWCA USA CEO Dr. Lorraine Cole, herself a recipient of a Dr. Dorothy I. Height Spirit Award, said, "Dr. Height's life's work personifies the YWCA purpose – a quest for peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. And, I contend that her signature hats were really not hats at all; they were her crowns – and, sometimes her warrior headdresses. Her legacy to the YWCA and the nation will be enduring."

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HOT! That is the best way to describe the summer thus far. This is a great change from last year's wet and dreary days. Summer at the YWCA is a time of fun and learning for our YWkids and Girls Giving and Growing Programs. Both programs are spending days in academic, recreational, and social activities that promote independence, empowerment, project-based learning and fun. I love summer and it is a great time to be a kid here at the YWCA.

Wonderful things are happening daily. This past spring I had the privilege of attending the YWCA USA Advocacy Day on the Hill in Washington, D.C. Not only was it great to march up Capitol Hill with my colleagues from around the country, but it was also amazing for me to be joined by my fourteen year old daughter Gabriella. This was her first nationwide YWCA experience (she has had many local experiences

since the day she was born). Please read her article in the next column to get her first-hand account of the day (she had some wonderful insights).

Our first YWCA Women of Distinction Event was a phenomenal success. Creating this event was something I have wanted to do here for a long time, and the day was fantastic. All of the women honored are amazing and I hope you will nominate someone next year for this event.

Lastly, our capital project is moving quite fast. We have just received a \$200,000 grant from the City of New Bedford and a \$40,000 grant from the Massachusetts Historic Commission. Our architect is putting the finishing touches on our building addition plans so that we may break ground in spring 2011. This groundbreaking will coincide with the YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts 100th Anniversary! (more to come on our anniversary plans in the next newsletter) This is an exciting time for me, the staff, board and volunteers. I hope you will all join us in supporting our capacity building efforts and at our Under One Roof Event on August 20th.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support.

Gail M. Fortes
Executive Director



By: Gabriella Fortes

On April 22, 2010, I attended my first advocacy day trip to Capitol Hill with my mom, Gail Fortes, YWCA Executive Director and other members from YWCA's across the United States. The YWCA New England region had the largest group. The trip was fun and exciting; not boring like I thought it would be.

We started the day with a meeting, wearing our persimmon and black uniforms, with the YWCA USA CEO Dr. Lorraine Cole and the YWCA USA Board Chair, Deb Stock. It was wonderful to meet these two important and powerful women. We then spoke about our agenda for the day and the two issues we would be advocating for: transitional housing programs for victims of domestic violence and childcare.

We split into groups by state and planned our speeches (we only have a few minutes to speak).

Our Massachusetts group was the largest. We continued to the steps of Capitol Hill, took photos and went to the Senate to meet with Senator Brown and Senator Kerry.

We did not get to meet Senator Kerry, but we did see him in the hall. We also met and shook hands with Senator Brown as we were leaving. We did meet with their aides who assured us that they are both supportive of both of these issues. We spoke about our two issues and why they are important and told personal stories about the clients we work with. We then walked across the way to the House of Representatives, where we met with an aide from Congressman Frank's office. He too supports both of these issues.

We ended our meetings by thanking the aides for their time and for the Senators' and Congressman's support. They asked me questions about myself and about my first advocacy trip. I had a lot of fun speaking to them and someday I would like to be an intern or aide in D.C. as it is seems fun and you get to meet a lot of people.

At the end of the day, we all met as a group and spoke about our day with the other YWCA members. Then we changed clothes and I headed out to the Smithsonian with my mom! This was a really great experience and I can't wait to go again.

save the date

you are invited to join us
Under One Roof

Garden Cocktail Party to benefit YWCA Southeastern MA

Friday, August 20, 2010
7:00pm - 10:00pm
Rotch-Jones-Duff House
396 County Street, New Bedford

\$100 per Person
\$1,000 per Table Sponsor
\$5,000 per Event Sponsor

For reservations or event information, please contact Linda
508-999-3255 or llarsen@ywcasema.org

50 businesses campaign

YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts invites you to become one of fifty New Bedford area companies that will help fund the YWCA's much-needed Levi Standish House building expansion.

Our fifty businesses will be permanently recognized in the first floor lobby of the YWCA's new 12,000 square foot building addition. We would be honored to welcome your participation and we ask you to consider a \$500.00 tax deductible contribution to help support the YWCA's \$4.6 million **Under One Roof** campaign.

The YWCA is in the midst of a \$4.6 million project to restore its historic Levi Standish House and construct a LEED-certified three-floor building addition. The goal of this expansion project is to consolidate its programs onto a safe, nurturing and barrier-free center city campus. The YWCA's women's housing and childcare programs will be significantly improved with this new addition. Furthermore, a Teen Center and Women's Resource Center will be created as new resources for our community. The YWCA will better serve over 5,250 women and children annually within its expanded Levi Standish House in a more cost-effective manner.

To pledge your support, please call: 508-999-3255.

our mission

YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts is
dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering
women and promoting

peace, justice, freedom, and
dignity for all.

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our voice

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2010 Women of Distinction Awards



Christina Bascom



Cecilia M. Felix

Seven of our area's most dynamic women were honored at the 1st annual YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts Women of Distinction awards luncheon on Wednesday, May 12, 2010 at the Country Club of New Bedford. Bright orange gerbera daisies and the scenic backdrop of the country club's golf course added to the festivity of this well-attended event. The luncheon raised much-needed funding and awareness for the vital programs and services at YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts, while honoring outstanding women whose lives and accomplishments reflect the YWCA's Mission of eliminating racism and

empowering women. These women are leaders in bringing key issues facing women, girls and people of color to the forefront, and were saluted for their exceptional commitment to improving the lives of women and girls through leadership, advocacy, and community service, while succeeding in their career fields.

Christina Bascom is a "professional volunteer" for various organizations in Marion and New Bedford including the Women's Fund of Southeastern MA and Our Sisters' School. Her main focus is raising consciousness around issues that affect women and girls, and empowering

women to own "half the sky." **Cecilia M. Felix** has been Principal of Holy Family Holy Name School and Director of Religious Education for St. Lawrence Martyr Parish for 20 years. She has dedicated herself to serving children and families in need through her tireless community efforts, Catholic education and the mission of the church. **Pauline M. Garcelon** is a retired New Bedford Police Detective of

34 years. She was the first Cape Verdean woman to be hired to the department, and she was one of three officers that established the city's first domestic violence unit. She helped lay the foundation for the systems and processes which presently serve to protect victims of domestic violence. **Bernadette Souza** has been Associate Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Greater New Bedford for



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Marie-Frances Rivera
Spirit of Leadership Award



Pauline M. Garcelon



Bernadette Souza



Marlene V. Tavares

the past 14 years. She fostered community initiatives for inner-city youth, surrounding self-esteem, drug prevention and health and nutrition. She has served in numerous volunteer capacities within the community, including the board of Our Sisters' School.

Marlene Tavares is President of United Front Development Corporation. She has served the New Bedford community for over 45 years in providing access

to quality low-income housing. She has also served on various boards including the MA Commission Against Discrimination, New Bedford Coalition Against Housing and Employment Discrimination and the NAACP.

Other special awards included the Spirit of Leadership Award honoring a young woman for her leadership in the community, recognizing the YWCA's important initiative to empower young women, and the Yvonne M. Drayton Award named for Y W C A Southeastern MA past Executive Director of 17 years, honoring a YWCA volunteer for their service to the organization.

Marie-Frances Rivera is a Program Manager at SMILES Mentoring Program. She has been instrumental in increasing mentor involvement at SMILES. She actively serves with the Women's Fund of Southeastern MA and the Fall River Women's Union. She is Assistant Treasurer on the YWCA Board of Directors and serves in various capacities as a board member, including efforts to increase participation of women under 30 within the YWCA.

Jean Kellaway served on the YWCA Board of Directors for 15 years, as well as several other committees including Nominating, Membership, and Racial Justice. She has been a YWCA New England Regional Representative and has participated in most

fundraising events. She has advocated for women's issues with the YWCA on Beacon Hill and Capitol Hill. Jean is an active member of First Unitarian Church, volunteers with the Coalition for Social Justice and the Coalition Against Poverty and the Soup Kitchen. She is a member of the New Bedford Art Museum, and is a political activist.

These women are trail blazers in our homes, businesses, schools and communities. Honoring these women reminds us of the tenacious and courageous visionaries of the past, celebrates the women who are changing the way we live today, and nurtures and inspires the young women who will shape our tomorrow.



Jean Kellaway
Yvonne M. Drayton Award

Sponsored by Ameriprise Financial, Jacqueline's Advanced Skin Therapy; Women's Fund of Southeastern MA and Bristol County Women's Journal

one more step forward to moving under one roof



YWCA Levi Standish House of Tomorrow. Please show your support in making a pledge to the YWCA Under One Roof Capital Campaign. Call Gail Fortes to schedule a tour of the magnificent Levi Standish House.

The YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts received a \$200,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the City of New Bedford for the Under One Roof - Levi Standish House Building Addition Project. The award letter from Mayor Scott Lang read, "I congratulate you on your submission of a successful proposal to address the needs of low to moderate income residents of the City of New Bedford. I appreciate your strong commitment to our community and share with you in the belief that these efforts will result in positive change and new opportunities for the City and her residents."

the tobacco industry targets our kids again!

Submitted by: Judith Coykendall, Partners for Clean Air

Data released in March 2010 by the Department of Public Health shows that cigarette smoking among youth is down from historical highs, but use of other tobacco products is on the rise. The data shows that tobacco companies are successfully attracting youth with these new, addictive, and dangerous other tobacco products.

Other tobacco products include fruit and candy flavored small cigars, dissolvable tobacco, chewing tobacco, and snus. Marketed in flavors such as pina colada and grape, these new products are more accessible to youth because they are much less expensive than cigarettes. It is often difficult for parents and concerned adults to detect usage of other tobacco products because there is no smoke or spit. For example, dissolvable tobacco can be sucked on during class like hard candy and snus are packaged in tins or little plastic containers that have the appearance of breath mints.

Why is it important that our youth do not buy or use these products? Because their bodies and brains are still developing, young people are especially vulnerable to nicotine addiction. The younger they start, the more likely they are to become lifetime tobacco users.

Now more than ever we need to be vigilant as a community. When you enter a store be aware of these new products and continue talking with your children about the dangers of using any type of tobacco product. Talk with other concerned adults about supporting measures that would make these products less accessible. If we work together we can stop the tobacco industry from creating a new generation of tobacco users.

Judith Coykendall, Director of Partners for Clean Air, a program of Seven Hills Behavioral Health, is asking adults to spread the word. Many people think that the tobacco problem is solved. It's not. Every year, more than 7,000 children in Massachusetts become daily smokers. They will go on to battle that addiction throughout their adult lives. Stay informed! Visit www.makesmokinghistory.org to sign up for email alerts about new tobacco products and ways to combat tobacco industry tactics.

**Want to quit smoking?
MassHealth covers it now!**



Ask your MassHealth primary care provider to prescribe medications and refer you to a stop-smoking counselor. You can also call for **free** stop-smoking help and info:
English:
1-800-TRY-TO-STOP (1-800-879-8678)
Spanish:
1-800-8-DÉJALO (1-800-833-5256)

You can also visit: www.trytostop.org

ywca women persimmon pics



Pictured Above: Gail Fortes, Councillor Jane Gonsalves, Nicole Almeida, Rita Ribeiro, Yolanda Dennis and Yvonne Drayton. YWCA Women model hats at the Harbor House fundraiser "Hats Off to Moms."



Pictured Left: Catherine Bourassa, YWCA Director of Programs and Services graduated from Leadership Southcoast Class of 2010! Catherine's team worked to form a new board at Treatment on Demand, a local nonprofit.

Pictured Below: Professor Jodie Drapal Kluver, Dr. Wendy Haynes, Athena Mota, Dr. Deniz Leuenberger and Dr. George Serra. Athena Mota, YWCA Director of Advocacy and Communications was awarded the Guy Clifford Scholarship from Bridgewater State College's, Master of Public Administration Program.



Pictured Left: YWCA USA Women take the steps of Capitol Hill in YWCA "uniform" on Advocacy Day.



why the ywca?

name: Natasha Iraheta

role(s) in the ywca: YWkids Kindergarten Coordinator and Yellow Room Group Leader

role(s)/hobbies outside of the ywca: Student

worked at the ywca for: 3 years

why did you become interested in the ywca?:

"My aunt was working at the YWkids program. She described it as a really fun place to work where you can make a difference in a child's life, so I applied."

what do you find particularly inspiring about the ywca?

"The commitment to the mission."

one of your proudest moments with the ywca...

"This year I marched downtown with a few of the children, as part of our Stand Against Racism. As we marched they chanted, "Honk if you care! Stop racism!". They held picket signs painted with their vision of an end to racism. One of the children, full of gumption and ready to take on the world, noticed a man passing by. The child stopped and pointed at him and yelled, "Hey! You! Stop being racist!"

3 words to describe the ywca...

"Inspiring, Life-Changing, Growing."



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YWkids Group Leader
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YWkids Group Leader
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our voice

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please call the YWCA:
508-999-3255 or visit:
www.ywcasema.org