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## **Junior League of Grand Rapids Awards \$10K Grant to YWCA for Supporting Child Survivors of Domestic Violence**

*Local women's leadership non-profit gives grant in January*

**Grand Rapids, Michigan – January 25, 2019** – The Junior League of Grand Rapids announced today that it selected the YWCA West Central Michigan to receive the Junior League's \$10,000 "New Year, New Money" Grant for 2019. The YWCA plans to use the funds to support children and their families experiencing domestic violence and who are participating in our larger community's multi-faceted efforts to provide temporary shelter and long-term affordable housing. The grant money was raised by the volunteer efforts of the Junior League of Grand Rapids, a women's leadership training organization dedicated to improving children's physical health in Grand Rapids.

Charisse Mitchell, CEO, YWCA West Central Michigan accepted the grant and commented, "When assailants abuse their partners, they are also affecting the physical health of the children in that family. Children, especially those growing up in abusive environments, haven't fully developed healthy coping mechanisms, so their stress often manifests itself physically. Nutrition can help mitigate some of the short- and long-term physical consequences. At the same time, domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children in this country. Grand Rapids is no different. Combined with the affordable housing crisis gripping our community, victims and children are finding themselves without even the most basic human needs -- a roof over their heads and food on the table. The Junior League's grant will help our organization participate in two of our community's most significant endeavors to help alleviate this. We could not be more pleased to be partnering with the Junior League, which understands these issues and is willing to invest in solutions."

In Phase 1 of the project, the YWCA will be partnering with a network of local housing agencies that have come together to create the Fulton Manor Emergency Shelter, a one-year collaboration intended as a stop-gap measure to address the extreme local need for housing for families experiencing homelessness. Approximately 75 families will reside at Fulton Manor, 90 percent of whom have been impacted by domestic violence. Approximately two-thirds of Fulton Manor residents will be children. Junior League's grant award will help provide regular, nutritious meals for the children and their families.

In the Phase 2 of the project, the YWCA's expert staff will train Junior League volunteers on the intersection of domestic violence with the issues surrounding class and race, and the impacts on children. This will deepen the Junior League's understanding of the complexity of issues that affect children's physical health as a whole. In Phase 3, the YWCA will use the remaining Junior League grant to support the establishment of nutrition education programs on-site at an affordable housing development in Grand Rapids. This site, which will serve as a longer-term

solution for families escaping domestic violence, will be located in a Challenge Scholar neighborhood, a community initiative that pays the college tuition for graduating Grand Rapids Public School students.

The Junior League of Grand Rapids, now in its 94th year, has served the local community since 1925 by recruiting and training women leaders to tackle community issues head-on. Its local mission specifically focuses on improving children's physical health. The Junior League has previously worked with Mary Free Bed, Grand Rapids Public Schools, the YMCA, CASA, St. John's Home, Habitat for Humanity, Kids' Food Basket, and countless other non-profit organizations providing services that benefit children's overall physical health. Two of the Junior League's signature projects are Kids in the Kitchen and its Wellness Adventure Yards. Through Kids in the Kitchen, which began in 2006, the Junior League partners with local organizations to teach children and families about nutrition and healthy lifestyles through games, interactive food preparation, and fun ways to exercise. The Junior League's Wellness Adventure Yards are innovative, state-of-the-art playgrounds that serve specific populations and locations in need of access to safe play. The Junior League's inaugural Wellness Adventure Yard opened in 2014 at the YWCA-Wege Sojourner House (formerly the Domestic Crisis Center), and its second one opened in 2018 at the Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center, an urban public charter elementary school.

"I am so proud of all that the Junior League has accomplished, and this \$10,000 grant to the YWCA is such an exciting culmination to several years of successful fundraising towards our programs," shared Lauren Jacoby, 94th President of Junior League of Grand Rapids. "This is a perfect fit for us to work alongside the YWCA and have a significant impact on children with some really immediate -- and also long-term -- needs."

"The YWCA is looking forward to working side-by-side with the Junior League to bring the Kids in the Kitchen program to families with whom we also work," said Mitchell. "We hope that our intensive training module for the Junior League will give Kids in the Kitchen volunteers a level of insight and education that informs the program's approach and supports its success." She added, "Given the scope and scale of domestic abuse -- with one in four women having suffered severe physical violence by an intimate partner -- an added benefit of the training will be the ability for Junior League members to identify red flags related to abuse and understand how to aid victims in any venue, including the communities in which the volunteers reside themselves."

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### **About Junior League of Grand Rapids**

The Junior League of Grand Rapids is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable. [www.juniorleaguegr.com](http://www.juniorleaguegr.com)

### **About YWCA West Central Michigan**

Established in 1900, the YWCA West Central Michigan transforms lives with leadership programs for girls and our community's most comprehensive prevention and intervention services for all people to address domestic and dating abuse, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, and stalking. [www.ywcawcmi.org](http://www.ywcawcmi.org)