

HISTORY

In 1905, Atlanta citizens organized the Young Women's Christian Association to put their Christian faith into action in meeting the pressing needs of the girls and women in the city. The pioneering spirit penetrated the leadership from the inception of the first Board of Directors in 1901. Such organizations were springing up in all parts of the world following the example of the earliest leaders of Boston and London where the industrial revolution was causing a social upheaval affecting the role of women and girls.

In those early days there was a need to do something about places to live, food, working conditions, recreation, and the learning of new skills. As the years have past, the social changes have continued to affect the roles of women and girls, and the YWCA has continued to change its program to meet the new needs as they arise.

During the first years of the Atlanta YWCA's history, the services developed around the need for social life, skill classes, gospel meetings, a library, a boarding home, and an employment bureau. Then the program began to extend to work with industrial girls in two mills. By 1915 the younger girls began to look for assistance in social growth and recreation, and the first High School Girls' Club was organized.

The war years brought patriotic league units with organizations in Chamblee, Doraville, Decatur, and Norcross. 150,102 guests were registered in Hostess Houses within one year. At the same time the youth clubs were expanding along with the increasing adult work.

In 1919 the Blue Triangle Branch at 128 Piedmont Ave, N.E. was formed to minister to the needs of the Negro youth.

By 1921 over 300 girls were enrolled in clubs and 1000 in recreational activities.

In May 1922 they became a Charter Member of the Community Chest. They joined in with cooperative efforts with other agencies and continued to study community data to concentrate upon the greatest need.

Land was purchased and Camp Highland was made available to the school and working girls. It was in 1922 that the YWCA's employment agency moved into the Chamber of Commerce Bureau and became a separate agency.

With the depression years came a reorientation of services to meet the trying period of unemployment and lack of recreational resources. The YWCA organized groups to help keep the city's playgrounds open. Residence rates were reduced and program took on new characteristics to meet the needs. A Day School for unemployed was organized. Because of the great need the Branch (now Phyllis Wheatley), moved to larger quarters on Boulevard.

In the '40s, the buildings began to show wear. The residence on Baker Street was sold and a Room Registry service was started to take its place. Program was decentralized into Summer Hill, the northeast, the northwest.

The '50s brought new buildings to the YWCA with a Central Building at 72 Edgewood and Phyllis Wheatley Branch at 599 Tatnall St. S. W. The dormitories were discontinued, but the room registry service was continued.

The work which had been developed with underprivileged girls was turned over to the Girls' Club - then in its beginning days. A new Mobile Service program developed through the guidance of the Atlanta Community Service Planning Board. Camp Ida

Prather was purchased and developed for Negro girls.

During the latter half of the 50s and the first few years of the '60s, the influx into Atlanta of many people from foreign lands caused the YWCA to organize an "International Club" and its annual Festival of Nations enables Atlantans to meet people from around the world. Its growth and development inspired the subsequent formation of the independent International Student Bureau.

In the years following the 1954 Supreme Court ruling, and other Civil Rights legislation, the YWCA continued to pioneer in interracial and intercultural relations. Its cafeteria was the first food establishment in Atlanta to desegregate. The YWCA opened its doors to meetings of the grass roots organization, "Help Our Public Education" with whom it cooperated in other ways in the struggle to keep the schools of Georgia open, being a charter member of "Organizations Assisting Schools in September."

The '60s have brought many changes to Atlanta, the USA and the world, causing the YWCA to reevaluate its program. The tremendous growth in population, migration of young girls to this urban center, racial unrest, the plight of the poor, the growth of suburbia and other socio-economic factors have influenced the YWCA to place high priority on work with teens and young adults in the developing of leadership and citizen responsibility, intercultural and interracial relations, starting with its own board, committees and staff.

After experimentation with a Mobile Unit program in a variety area, decided to concentrate in the DeKalb area, setting up a DeKalb YWCA Center, continuing a decentralized program in Capitol View, Carol Heights, Thomasville, Kirkwood, and the heart of the city.

Concurrently with the change in program has come the maturing of the two buildings of 1950 and 1952. The fifteen years of service is showing the expected wear and tear. The 1918 camp has almost completed its usefulness to the thousands of girls it has served through the years.

AFFILIATIONS - The Atlanta YWCA received its charter from the State of Georgia, March 2, 1902. This charter was renewed in March 1942 for a period of thirty five years.

In May 1922 the Atlanta YWCA became a charter member of the Community Chest.

The YWCA is also a charter affiliate of the YWCA of the U.S.A, with the organization of a National Board in 1912. Through the triennium conventions, the YWCAs of the USA have set up certain basic standards and certification requirements. Through a self evaluation of these basic standards and a review of its Constitution, the Atlanta YWCA is certified for a period of three years. Our last self evaluation was made in 1965 and our revised Constitution was certified in December, 1966.

The YWCA has a history of reaching out to meet the needs of women and girls through its unique role in Atlanta, cooperating with other social agencies and civic organizations in the community in evaluating its program. Such organizations as the Travellers Aid, Camp Fire Girls, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, have come into being and developed through the YWCA. It is an active member agency in the USO.

In 1965 the YWCA began to work with EOA through the Neighborhood Youth Corps. This work has expanded to include a work-study project and Vista Volunteers.

OBJECTIVES for 1967 and for the next few years ahead - 1975.

The purpose of the YWCA over the United States in Community YWCAs - Article I. of the Constitution of the Atlanta YWCA:

To build a fellowship of women and girls devoted to the task of realizing in our common life, those ideals of personal and social living to which we are committed by our faith as Christians.

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