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The Journal News | THURSDAY, March 3, 2011

WT Community news as it hap



Ben Rubin/The Journal News

Isabel Fragoso, left, who lives at the YWCA Residence in White Plains, shares a laugh with local YWCA Associate Executive Director Lori Stanlick on Feb. 17 at the residence's newly renovated Acheson Wallace Hall building.

Revitalized Y brings pride after long decay

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WHITE PLAINS — For years, the local YWCA Residence — which provides permanent housing for single women — made due with a spotty heating system, chronic leaks that forced housing units to shut down and disrepair throughout its aging facilities.

"I think it was very difficult for the women who were living here with deteriorating conditions," said YWCA Associate Executive Director Lori Stanlick, who runs the Residence on North Broadway. "I think all staff panicked when it rained,

and it's just sad to see a resource like this that is so needed in the community start to dwindle."

Much of that reality changed when the Residence reopened its 1970s-era Acheson Wallace Hall building in December, after a year-long renovation.

The effort was part of a \$26 million project to revitalize Acheson Wallace and its adjoining circa-1920s Kennedy Duncan Residence building — with Kennedy Duncan now starting its own yearlong renovation.

At Acheson Wallace, new lighting, kitchens, bathrooms and colorfully tiled floors provide a more

How to help

The YWCA Residence is holding a \$350,000 fundraising drive to buy new furniture. To give, contact the YWCA Development Office at 914-949-6227, Ext. 147, or e-mail dcylich@ywcaawpcw.org.

For assistance getting a housing unit at the Y, call 914-428-1130 or go to www.YWCAWhitePlains.com.

modern environment for the residents, who come to the Y for reasons varying from economic difficulties, homelessness, domestic violence, drug problems and recent

release from incarceration.

New energy-efficient electrical and heating and cooling systems were built, and the roof is now sound.

Acheson Wallace is now nearly back to full capacity: To complete the renovations, the location shifted residents to Kennedy Duncan and shut down units as they were vacated. By reconfiguring its space and consolidating offices, the renovation will also add eight more units to the Residence, from 185 in both buildings to 193.

Kennedy Duncan will have a new

YWCA: Renovations bring pride as donations sought

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"Sisters' Village," which will provide a social hub for the location and centralize many of the Residence's offerings, such as counseling services, skill-building workshops, an on-site emergency food pantry and free professional clothing available through its "Sisters' Closet."

"I feel very proud: very proud of the staff, proud of the accomplishment. We're halfway done," said the Y's chief executive officer, Maria Imperial. "It's just an incredible feeling. When I first came here I did not feel proud to see the leaks in the roof and the big garbage cans collecting the drops of water, and feeling really terrible at that time."

Resident Isabel Fragoso, 51, came to the Y about six months ago through its Awakenings program, a bridge to the outside world for recently freed inmates.

After relapsing into her substance-abuse habits and landing in jail for seven months, she now will be sober for a year this month.

"It's wonderful," she said of her new unit. "It's nice and comfortable, your own privacy."

Funding for construction, secured over several years, came from a patchwork of federal, state and local governing agencies, as well as private companies. The government financing requires that the housing remain available for at least the next 50 years. But now, to fill up the

new space, the Y is seeking financial donations to help buy new furniture for the individual rooms, common areas and office spaces, because many of the old pieces were well past their useful life and had to be thrown out.

Outside, taking a smoking break with friends, Gail Felder, 62, said she came to the Y because of economic difficulty and ended up staying for 14 years. She recently moved back into an Acheson Wallace cluster with her same group of old friends.

About the new, clean, yet still basic surroundings, she said: "It's going to take a while to make it like home here. ... As far as it goes, it's very nice, but we have to add some more things to make it homier."

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