



*Before I went to Aswalos House at the age of 18, I was a shy person and I never talked very much - I pretty much kept to myself. But the group meetings and workshops forced me to talk about everything - to put everything on the table - and they helped me gain my self-esteem.*

*Now, 12 years later, I am married and the proud mother of three children: Elijah, age 11; Ione, age 7 and Akil, age 4. I started working as soon as I left Aswalos House. Now I get to help other women - just like I was helped. When people call asking questions and seeking information, I know exactly how they feel - because I've been there; I've been through it.*

*— Zaneta Harris-Cobham*

December 2003

### **Dear Friend:**

Zaneta found her way at the YWCA Boston's Aswalos House, a refuge for homeless and pregnant or parenting teens. In fact, Zaneta is only one among the thousands of young women confronted with critical life decisions and difficult challenges who find their way through the support and services of the YWCA Boston.

How do we do it? Just last year the YWCA Boston:

- Provided over 4000 under and uninsured women of color and immigrant women over the age of 40 with access to breast cancer screening and education services through **ENCORE<sup>Plus</sup>**;
- Gave over 2000 women of all ages, incomes and walks of life a place to call home at the **Berkeley Residence**, the first integrated housing facility in Boston;
- Engaged nearly 1000 middle and high-school youth in **Youth Voice Collaborative**, an innovative after school program that fosters critical thinking and leadership skills through media literacy education;
- Afforded 26 homeless, pregnant or parenting teens living at **Aswalos House** with opportunities to acquire life and parenting skills while finishing high school or attending a job training program;
- Created a forum for thousands of women and their families to promote civic dialogue around critical social, economic and political issues through the **Social Change Initiative** and our **Women's Leadership Event**.

We are proud of this success. And without your financial support, we could not sustain our groundbreaking programs and establish new services to meet the emerging needs of women and their families. We thank you for your past support, and count on you for our future. We are confident that we can meet the challenges of these uncertain economic times. Our mission and our purpose - to empower women and to eliminate racism - keep us focused on all that we have to do. In the coming year, the YWCA Boston plans to:

- Create 184 units of housing in the Back Bay through The YWCA Boston Project, currently the largest affordable housing project in Boston;
- Introduce our Media Minds© media literacy curriculum nationwide, responding to the overwhelming demand for our Youth Voice Collaborative programming;
- Launch our first major Capital Campaign that will provide affordable housing in the heart of Back Bay, as well as expanded YWCA program and community space.

You know whom we have helped and supported with your dollars in the past - and now you know how your dollars will help our future. Please continue to support the women and families the YWCA Boston reaches each year and become part of the YWCA Boston Fund. And remember these words from Zaneta:

*I made a mistake; I got pregnant as a teenager. But others were willing to help me- they saw the best in me and supported me and my son. Now, I am doing for other women what they did for me- helping, supporting and understanding them.*

May generosity fill your heart with joy during this holiday season.

Sincerely,



Marti Wilson-Taylor  
President and CEO



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