

Five are celebrated as YWCA success stories

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Let me introduce you to five remarkable women in our community. Sara Alvarez, a dance instructor who owns the Premiere Academy of Performing Arts School of Dance.

Lesya Chira, a member of the YWCA staff who assists Russian and Ukraine clients.

Linda Macrae, a fourth-term student at Corban College who is majoring in family studies.

Maria Rocho, a case manager who works for Northwest Senior & Disability Services in Dallas.

And Lindsey Spencer, a registered nurse who works at Salem Hospital.

These are the faces of the YWCA, a social-service agency that offers programs that empower women to overcome adversity and achieve success.

"This is why it's so much fun to do this work, when you look out in the community and see what a difference our programs are making," said Carol Green, the executive director of the YWCA. "They're all living proof of that."

"Of course, there are hundreds of others."

Green recognized the five women during the 13th annual YWCA Women Helping Women luncheon Tuesday at Salem Conference Center.

The fundraiser, like those held by other nonprofit organizations, never ceases to inspire.

The 700 business and community leaders who gathered to support the programs and services offered by the YWCA heard the stories of these women.

They heard how Alvarez, Spencer and Rocho benefited from the teen-parent program, which Green noted has 50 girls on the waiting list.

"I owe my future to the Y. I owe my successes to the Y. I owe my happiness to the YWCA," said Spencer, who splits time between the pediatric and intensive-care units at Salem Hospital.

Chira benefited from the resource assistance program and today is paying it forward as a member of the YWCA staff. She coordinates interpreter services for the agency.

"It opened my eyes to the needs of the community," Chira said of her experience with the YWCA.

Macrae benefited from the agency's residential housing program.

All of them had the courage to grab the helping hand they were offered and the patience to



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Lesya Chira (from left), Linda Macrae, Sara Alvarez and Lindsey Spencer were recognized Tuesday at the 13th annual YWCA Women Helping Women luncheon at the Salem Conference Center.

never let go.

"The YWCA has definitely changed my life," Macrae said.

The luncheon marked "95 years of celebrating success." The Salem YWCA opened downtown in April 1914 with 400 charter members.

Today, its headquarters and many of its programs operate out of a 12,500-square-foot building on Broadway NE. Green, who is retiring at the end of May, gets much of the credit for spearheading the \$3 million capital campaign.

"She's the reason we have the building," said Jan Margosian, a YWCA board member.

Programs such as Da Vinci Girls and It's My Life were launched under Green's leadership. Da Vinci Girls is an after-school educational program for third- to fifth-grade girls, with the goal of stimulating their interest in science, math and technology. It's My Life is a life-skills and leadership program for young women ages 17-24, with the goal of providing a venue of support that crosses economic and social barriers.

"The most rewarding thing about being the director of the YWCA," Green said, "is looking back at the success stories we've had each and every day."

"Forward This" appears Wednesdays and Sundays and highlights the people, places and organizations of the Mid-Willamette Valley. To share a story, contact Capi Lynn at clynn@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6710.