



NEWS RELEASE

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YWCA Knoxville & the Tennessee Valley names Dr. Martha Buchanan as interim CEO

YWCA Knoxville & the Tennessee Valley has named Dr. Martha Buchanan as interim CEO of the organization while it participates in a local and nationwide search for a permanent chief executive officer.

The announcement comes after the board of directors accepted the resignation of CEO Rachel Haverkamp, who is stepping back to spend more time with her family.

“We are pleased to have Dr. Buchanan step in to provide thoughtful, proven leadership, empowering our board and staff to continue delivering the programs and impact that YWCA clients and the community rely on, as we engage in a search for the next CEO,” said Susan Edwards, president of the YWCA Knoxville & the Tennessee Valley board of directors. “We are grateful to Rachel for her five years dedicated to the YWCA, including the past two as CEO, in which she has continued to advance the mission and execute and grow the programming in meaningful and successful ways. We wish her the best, and she always will be a part of the YWCA.”

Under Haverkamp’s leadership, the organization achieved several milestones, including securing a \$1 million grant from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott and additional increased grant funding, which has led to opportunities for greater mission driven impact including enhancing programming at the YWCA Phyllis Wheatley Center and support the organization’s racial justice initiatives.

During her time at YWCA, Haverkamp empowered staff to lead with the agency’s mission to eliminate racism. She successfully increased the YWCA’s annual budget and prioritized funding to attract and retain qualified and skilled professionals at every level of the organization. She launched the agency’s internal racial and social justice workgroup, an employee advisory council with the responsibility and power to make policy-level change impacting hiring, agency values and staff development. Additionally, Haverkamp oversaw YWCA’s involvement in three large-scale projects, including the agency’s fourth Office on Violence Against Women award to serve as a national model for firearms dispossession in domestic violence cases; a core membership in United Way’s East Tennessee Collaborative Council to govern and implement Tennessee’s Opportunity Pilot Initiative;

and the State of Tennessee-funded Families First project. All three projects will be underway in the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023.

Dr. Martha Buchanan is a former board member of the YWCA Knoxville & the Tennessee Valley and previously served as the director of the Knox County Health Department (KCHD). Buchanan joined KCHD in 2004 as the assistant public health officer, was promoted to public health officer in 2006 and took on the role of director in 2010. She graduated from Carson Newman College and East Tennessee State University James H. Quillen College of Medicine. She is board certified in family practice and is a member of the American Academy of Family Practice and the Tennessee Academy of Family Practice. Her expertise in public health and social services, proven leadership experience and knowledge and advocacy of the YWCA position her well to work with the staff and board as interim CEO.

“Together with the board of directors, I am confident of the foundation in place to drive advancement of the mission of the YWCA, and I am energized and ready to do my part to continue delivering life-changing services,” Buchanan said. “We will continue our momentum in meeting critical needs in our community; serving women, domestic violence victims, youth and others; and working to eliminate racism and empower women across our region.”

With guidance and support from YWCA USA, the board of the directors of the YWCA Knoxville & Tennessee Valley has engaged in a thoughtful, intentional and steady transition to Dr. Buchanan as interim CEO and plans to continue those efforts in launching the search for a permanent leader over the next few months.

For more information about the YWCA, its mission and programs, visit ywcaknox.com.

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About YWCA Knoxville and the Tennessee Valley

YWCA Knoxville and the Tennessee Valley has been serving women and their families in East Tennessee since 1899. Offerings have changed over the years to meet community needs, but one thing has remained the same for more than 100 years: women and families from all walks of life depend on our services.

The YWCA currently operates its Jenny Boy Keys of Hope Program for Women for 58 women in downtown Knoxville. Women come to the YWCA for a variety of reasons and with a variety of needs. Whatever the reason for a woman's stay, the program's goal is to provide affordable housing in a safe environment with supportive services that promote self-sufficiency.

Coordinated out of the YWCA Oak Ridge building, the YWCA also provides scattered site transitional housing services for victims of domestic violence and their families in Anderson, Blount, Knox, Loudon, Roane and Sevier Counties. This program offers financial education, parenting education and trauma-informed care, including support groups and classes specifically for victims of domestic violence.

A trusted East Knoxville community center since 1920, YWCA Phyllis Wheatley Center is the main facility for the YWCA's after school, summer and other enrichment youth programs. Phyllis Wheatley Center staff and volunteers work tirelessly to provide youth with the tools necessary to overcome obstacles and to succeed in school and beyond.