



Official Statement

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YWCA Phyllis Wheatley Center Reacts to Tragedies at Austin-East Magnet High School

YWCA Knoxville and the Tennessee Valley is deeply saddened by Monday’s events at Austin-East Magnet High School.

While details are still developing, the violent and senseless shootings of five students since the beginning of the year make it clear that our community must take action to prevent youth violence. As a community center that has served East Knoxville for over 100 years, the YWCA Phyllis Wheatley Center (PWC) is dedicated to providing a safe, supportive environment for middle and high school students in an after-school setting. YWCA staff will continue to provide consistent, meaningful relationships and intentional programming and resources to our East Knoxville youth.

The tragedies that have unfolded this year highlight the urgent importance of quality services, specifically around violence prevention and healthy relationships, like YWCA’s GameChangers which teaches boys and young men about healthy and unhealthy relationships, violence in relationships, skills for speaking out when they witness violence against women, and more. We fervently call on our community leaders to respond to this crisis by immediately committing the needed resources to support youth violence prevention in our community.

YWCA urges the community to join us now in recognizing National Youth Violence Prevention Week (April 12-16) and demand action to ensure that students in our East Knoxville community are safe.

The Phyllis Wheatley Center will offer extended hours beginning at 2:30 PM for Austin-East High School students on Tuesday, April 13 and Wednesday, April 14. Middle school students may attend after school during normal operating hours.

About YWCA Knoxville and the Tennessee Valley:

With a mission to eliminate racism and empower women, YWCA Knoxville and the Tennessee Valley is a 120-year-old social service organization focused on offering victim advocacy services, violence prevention and education, transitional housing, and youth development programs across a six-county service area. YWCA has been offering a wide range of services to victims of domestic violence for 35 years, including: culturally specific services for refugee, immigrant, and Hispanic/Latina communities; referrals to partner organizations and shelters; referrals to one of the YWCA’s transitional housing programs; court- and community-based advocacy; crisis intervention; safety planning and danger assessment; and tangible assistance with housing and other essential basic needs.

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