



YOLANDA'S STORY FINDING BALANCE

"Sometimes we make mistakes and we just need a little push.
That's what Open Doors is, that little push."

Yolanda Ervin has been a member of the Open Doors Resident Community for four years. She was born and raised on the south side of Chicago, graduating from an all-girl's charter school where former first lady Michelle Obama once gave an address. A series of hardships that came about after completing her studies left her struggling to maintain financial stability and, eventually, led her to experiencing homelessness. "Once I got older, things just got harder. I would put a lot of pressure on myself about where I wanted to be in life."

In search of a fresh start, Yolanda's determination brought her to a shelter in Benton Harbor and, eventually, to Kalamazoo. "I packed up everything that I could carry and boarded a Greyhound bus. I came here to find my way." This journey brought Yolanda to the front door of The Next Door Shelter for Women. As a Next Door guest, Yolanda had difficulty meeting the requirements. "There's a way things need to be done, and I wasn't handling responsibilities." She was eventually given a grace period from the program, with the invitation to return.

After finding steady employment, Yolanda was finally able to transition into her own apartment, but money troubles followed soon after with debts that had accumulated over the years. "I was struggling to gain control of my finances." Remembering the support she received at The Next Door Shelter, Yolanda wanted to return to Open Doors in better standing. This time, she would prove that she was serious about remaining committed to programming.

Yolanda was welcomed back into the Residence Community, where she worked with Stephanie Hoffman (now Open Doors' Executive Director) to learn positive saving habits. "Stephanie is very good at targeting any situation a person may be facing, but also at targeting things that help you take those extra steps. I'm grateful for her wisdom."

Now a resident at Open Doors, Yolanda has been able to pay off several debts using budgeting and saving practices learned from her program manager, Erika Brown. "I fell down a few times, but I needed to try again. Open Doors is helping me find that balance."



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Open Doors

CELEBRATING
50
YEARS



A SAFE PLACE
TO LAND



A SPIRIT OF RESILIENCE



Once again, I am left breathless by the generosity of our community. Last year, a year unlike any we have ever imagined, you came through for the adults and children in our shelters and Residence Community in a big way. Thanks to your contributions and gifts, 218 people received care and support in 2020 that will impact the course of their lives. I am so very grateful for this community of individual donors, businesses, churches, and foundations... all 1,067 of you!

What words come to your mind when you think about the last year? Perhaps you think of these words we've heard so often lately: pandemic, quarantine, lockdown, or unprecedented. Those words sound to me like a society filled with fear, fatigue, and sadness instead of the strength and hope I see at Open Doors. If I could summarize the spirit of 2020 in one word, it would be, "Resilience." I see it in our shelter guests and residents as they fight what often seem like unbeatable odds to keep their families safe. I see it in our staff as they find creative ways to stay connected with our community, and to continue working as a team, even as we are separated and working from home. I see incredible resilience in Kalamazoo when community members call us during a pandemic to say, "How can I help? What does Open Doors need right now?"

Thanks to your partnership in 2020:

- ▶ **53 households** in our Residence Community were able to cover their monthly program fees after COVID-related loss of income.
- ▶ **67 residents** partnered with our team to learn budgeting and money saving skills, share their dreams and goals, and create a plan for meeting those goals.
- ▶ **23 domestic violence survivors** made the courageous leap to come to The Open Door and The Next Door shelters and start a new path forward for themselves.

Every person who comes to Open Doors receives more than housing. They are encouraged to turn their dreams into reality. They receive wings to fly, and just think how much higher you can fly knowing that you have a safe place to land. That is resilience in action.

Thank you for being the resilient community that you are, and for providing a safe place to land.

Peace and Blessings,

Stephanie Hoffman Executive Director



**1,067 DONORS
LIKE YOU GAVE
\$783,178**

Making Possible:

- 169** People in our Residence Community
- 100** Households
- 34%** 57 Children in Stable Housing
- 25%** Average Percentage of Income paid for rent
- 1** Homeownership

- 72%** Residents Have Stable Housing for Over a Year
- 6** Moved into Market-Rate Housing
- 3** Moved Out of State for Job Relocation
- 49** Guests in The Open Door & The Next Door shelters
- 56** Average Nights Stayed in Shelter
- \$1,785** Average Amount Saved
- 63%** Secured Employment
- 51%** Moved into Stable Housing

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