



Nurturing Children

Childcare

Throughout its history, the YWCA of Asheville has responded to the changing needs of women in the community. The importance of childcare to women's economic and physical health became evident as early as the 1940s when the YWCA Young Wives Club began offering group childcare during its meetings. The service expanded in the



YWCA Young Wives Club, 1954. [0172] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

"The reason girls didn't go back to school was because there was no place for them to leave their babies."

—Jo Dunton, YWCA Program Director, 1973

1950s as the Central YWCA began offering a supervised nursery/playroom for all YWCA members who came to exercise, swim, or attend a class or meeting. The

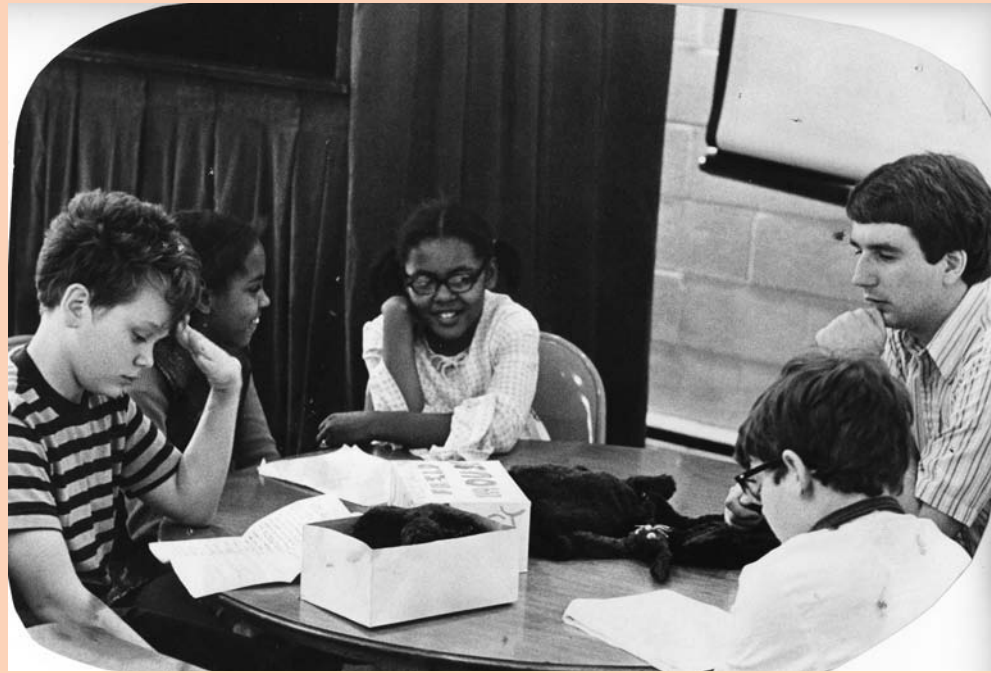
presence of this nursery drew many young mothers to the YWCA and provided a place for meeting new friends and socializing.

In 1973, the YWCA nursery services were expanded to serve the wider community when a drop-in childcare center opened its doors.

Simultaneously, the YWCA began offering childcare to the teen mothers who participated in the YWCA Continuing Education Program for young women. Even after the school system took over the program for teens, the YWCA stayed involved by offering childcare for the young moms and others in the community. In 1973, seeing the great need for such services, the YWCA sought and received a \$60,000 federal grant to form five family daycare homes, serving five children in each home.



YWCA Continuing Education Program, 1973. [0191] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.



Afterschool, 1970s. [0700] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

These innovative initiatives led the YWCA to open its own childcare center, in 1985, at 185 South French Broad Avenue. To facilitate childcare for all, the small facility served children up to 5 years old whose parents worked or were in school. The YWCA Child Care Center enrolled in the state subsidy program so that eligible families could receive financial assistance and participated in a mainstreaming program to meet the needs of children with physical disabilities. Since its inception, the YWCA Child Care Center has been committed to delivering the highest quality childcare to children of all backgrounds and abilities. Over the years it has grown in both quality and size and has been recognized by the North



Childcare, 1970s. [0714] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

"The YWCA was one of the few places in Asheville where our daughter could be part of a program that reflected the greater community in which we lived. At the YWCA, Emmaleigh got to know children of different races, backgrounds, cultures and physical abilities."

—Mary Ritter, Former Board Member

Carolina licensing bureau as among the finest childcare centers in the region.

School-Age

In 1974, with an enrollment of forty students, the YWCA began its licensed afterschool program for school-age children—the first in Asheville. The YWCA transported children from seven city and county schools to participate in arts and crafts, swimming, and field trips. To support working parents, the afterschool program opened its doors all day on snow days,



Dance class, 1966. [0672] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804. In addition to structured childcare services, the YWCA has had an ongoing commitment to nurture children through its camps, swimming lessons and enrichment programs.

on teacher work days, and during vacations—including the long summer vacation. It was the first program in the community to offer these services. By 2006 the afterschool program was serving up to 120 students a day from thirteen schools, making it the largest such program in a single facility in Asheville. While growing to maximum capacity, the YWCA School-Age Program has expanded its mission to focus on enrichment and academic support for children through homework assistance and tutoring. Like the Child Care Center, the YWCA School-Age Program has received recognition as one of the highest quality programs of its kind in the Asheville/Buncombe area.

In 1995, the YWCA was awarded a grant by the Department of Juvenile Justice called Support Our Students (SOS). SOS is designed to offer middle-school students a positive alternative from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm, when juvenile

crime and risky behaviors are most likely to occur. The focus of the program is to provide academic support, enrichment activities, and lively discussion on topics of concern to young adults.



School-age program, 1970s. [0035] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

From its early years, the YWCA of Asheville recognized the connection between community childcare and the empowerment of women. Carrying on that legacy, all three childcare programs sponsored by the YWCA of Asheville provide year-round support for working families by nurturing, protecting, and enriching the lives of community children.

**eliminating racism
empowering women**
ywca