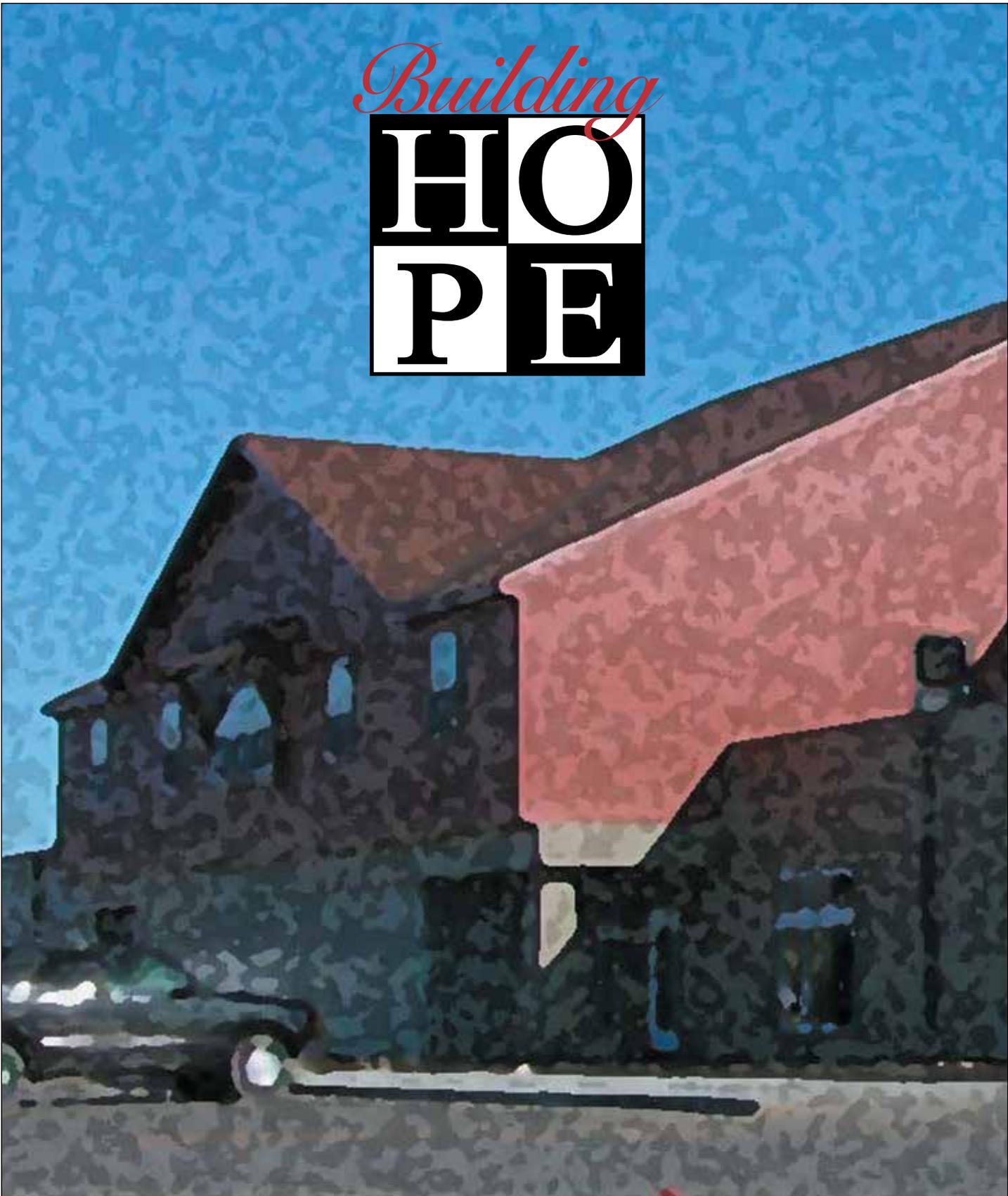


Building
HOPE



BUILDING HOPE

*Providing safe shelter and supportive services
for women and children.*



It takes more than a savvy solicitation committee and a smart development team to raise money for a multi-million dollar capital campaign. Certainly good strategies are fundamental, but what really carries an organization through the ups and downs, the minor obstacles and major setbacks is an unshakeable commitment to the non-profit's mission, as well as a passionate empathy for and dedication to the individuals served.

In addition to all the hard work and tenacious fundraising that went into YWCA Cass Clay's "Building Hope" effort, this successful capital campaign greatly benefited from caring staff, committed Board members and volunteers, and professional fundraising counsel. Individually they each truly understood, on a human level, what the campaign would mean to thousands of women and children—both immediately and well into the future. Ultimately, it was this collective conviction that helped navigate the campaign through the inevitable highs and lows of the process.

Empathy came easily to those working on "Building Hope." As an organization, YWCA Cass Clay had experienced the instability and burden of wondering

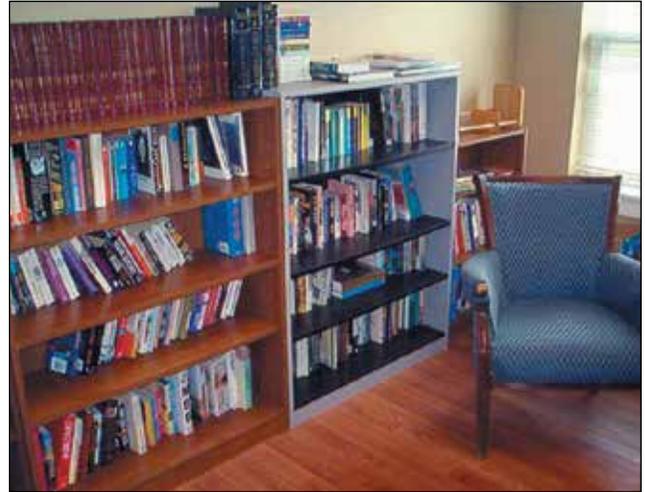
"what to do" and "where to go"—an experience similar to that of the many women and children seeking "... safe shelter and supportive services" from the YWCA.

The Decision

In 2001, the organization learned that its facility—used for decades to shelter women and children in need—had a severe black mold problem. The YWCA was forced to immediately evacuate the premises. Two more stopgap moves followed, until the organization finally settled into a leased space.

Said Executive Director Judy Green, "As we were discussing our options, one of our long-time and larger contributors, Evelyn Larson, spoke up. Her comment was pivotal in our decision-making process. She said, 'We've made-do for too long. Let's build something new!'"

The decision to take the harder road in the short-term (launching a capital campaign) meant that the organization would be able to provide substantial long-term benefits—a safe and secure "home" and expanded services for years and years to come.



The leadership set a campaign goal of \$3.5 million for acquiring land and new construction. Not only would the new building be designed and configured especially for YWCA's specific use—something they had never done before—but the land would provide plenty of outdoor areas. A homey, picket fence to convey a welcome feeling would double as a venue for donor recognition.

Green explained, "Now that our facility is open for business, our Memory Fence not only gives the property a home-like quality, but each plank can be engraved in honor of a donor or loved one. The entire fence is already in place and, so far, at least half of the planks have been gifted and engraved."

The Campaign

So how did a deliberate decision to "...build something new" turn into the beautiful facility that it is today? YWCA's first step was to retain a professional fundraising firm to help guide them through the campaign process. Among other things, Hartsook Companies, Inc. Executive Vice President Susan Schneweis helped the organization establish various campaign committees, gather names of potential donors and develop a strategic solicitation plan.

Said Schneweis, "This campaign had some unusual challenges, but the staff and volunteers never quit. They stayed focused on the purpose of the organization and the need for a new shelter. They successfully raised \$3.5

million because they did not allow themselves to be distracted by side issues. They continued to press through on the important work at hand."

Board members knew when they opted to go forward with the campaign, that their personal giving was a prerequisite. This translated into 100 percent board participation. The first solicitation call following board gifts was also the first-ever solicitation visit made by Leadership Gifts Chair Denise Magness. "I was quite nervous. I hauled out my folder and asked the couple, JoAnn and Matt Butler, for \$100,000. I gave them the exact speech I had practiced aloud many, many times prior to our face-to-face meeting. Matt looked at me and said kindly, 'You haven't done this much, have you? You should have asked us for \$200,000. Remember...' he advised, 'always ask for more than you think they can give.' Fortunately, the Butlers gave us the full \$200,000, along with this invaluable lesson," said Magness. "From then on, I adhered to his advice. There were a few steely looks along the way, but I think some people may have even been a little flattered that we thought they could give that much. We received very few 'no's'; and when we did, we were usually told why a gift wasn't possible—and it was never for lack of support for the organization."

Campaign Chair Willy Jacobson concluded that, on the whole, people in the community were very excited about the YWCA establishing a permanent home. "It was



our commitment to the mission and the organization's connection with the community that made this campaign such a success. We were persistent and optimistic, even though the campaign lagged at times. We kept on asking for gifts and kept our eyes on the goal—not solely on the timeline. This helped us to manage our expectations. We just kept telling the YWCA's story and the community responded. Despite challenges along the way, the value and importance of the mission was never in question."

Large foundation grants helped propel the campaign to success, such as the Bush Foundation and Otto Bremer Foundation grants, each in the amount of \$250,000. In addition, the Otto Bremer Foundation provided a low-interest loan for new construction. Low-interest construction financing and further permanent mortgage financing from Gate City Bank resulted in a gift in interest savings of more than \$138,000. A gift from Feder Properties on the purchase of land was valued at over \$200,000. The YWCA received a family gift of \$125,000 from Glyndon Farms Co. Three \$100,000 gifts, two from anonymous donors and the other from long-time YWCA Cass Clay supporters, R. G. and Lorry Lyngstad, helped move the campaign toward its goal. An anonymous couple came forward with a key pledge of \$50,000.

Many of the larger banks in the area supported the campaign with significant gifts of \$25,000 each. The local newspaper, *The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead*, and West Acres Development each pledged \$50,000. The City of Fargo donated money through a Community Development Block Grant of \$50,000, as well as an additional \$85,000 designated to build two new transitional homes at the new YWCA facility.

Construction services through Goldmark Properties and the architectural services of Shultz Torgerson represented very meaningful in-kind gifts. Said Green, "Both companies were so patient with us and so supportive of the mission."

The Results

Today, the YWCA's facility resonates with "wall-to-wall warmth and beauty." One woman served by YWCA Cass Clay walked slowly into the new building (the largest emergency shelter in the area, outside of Minneapolis), hand-in-hand with her three small children. "Wow!" she gasped. "We've never lived in a place that was so nice."

Staff members have already noticed how the excellence of the facility appears to positively impact the families served, elevating their sense of self-worth and personal value. Somehow, by living in a facility built "especially for them," the women are able to dream new dreams and believe greater things for their own futures and for those of their children. "Maybe I can find a job I deserve and enjoy. Maybe I will be able to start a new life and create a new future for my children. Maybe we should expect something better for our family."

With the establishment of the new YWCA Cass Clay Shelter for Women and Children, there's no "maybe" about it. "Building Hope," has allowed the women and children served at this facility to replace "maybe" with "now we can."

About the Consultant – Susan Schneweis, Executive Vice President, has been a fundraising professional for more than 18 years. She has helped countless nonprofit organizations in youth services, social services, education and healthcare raise millions of dollars as they seek to expand and improve services for their clients. Susan can be reached at susan@hartsookcompanies.com.

About Hartsook Companies, Inc. – Hartsook Companies, Inc., has served nonprofits nationwide with capital, endowment and annual campaigns; leadership support; board training; marketing and more since 1987. The firm has conducted more than 1,700 campaigns ranging from \$500,000 to more than \$1 billion. The web site: www.hartsookcompanies.com.

About the Author – Denise Rhoades is a free-lance writer that regularly works with Hartsook clients to write campaign case statements, articles and stories of fundraising success.

