Laura, Jeremy, and their three children, ages 4, 6, and 11 entered the YWCA Sojourner’s Shelter for Homeless Women and Families in March. For the past five years, the family had been homeless off and on since Jeremy had lost his job. Jeremy had been working odd jobs just to keep gas in the car as they moved from place to place staying with family and friends, always struggling to find work and a place to call home.

When the family came to Sojourner’s, they had lost all of their identification documents including birth certificates, social security cards, and driver’s licenses. After their Case Manager completed their assessment, the staff began working on replacing the family’s missing documents and transferring their child support, food stamps, and medical records from another state. Sojourner’s Residential Nurse also referred the family to WV Health Right to get checkups and COVID-19 testing.

Due to the family moving from place to place, the children’s education had suffered. The staff in the Children’s Program contacted the Kanawha County School Homeless Facilitators to discuss options and get the children connected to the local school system. With the assistance of the Homeless Facilitators, the Children’s Program staff were able to get the two school aged children enrolled.

Laura and Jeremy attended the YWCA Sojourner’s Job Readiness Center, where they received skills needed such as life skills, education, resume building, and employment searching/placement opportunities. Jeremy worked diligently on obtaining employment and, within a short period of time, he obtained a full-time position, despite the pandemic. Laura also attended classes to improve her basic skills so that she could better assist their children, two of which have special needs, with their schoolwork.

The Housing Coordinator took them to visit several places, and it didn’t take long for them to find an apartment that they could call home. We were able to help them with the rental deposit and utilities. When moving day came, their smiles were contagious when the Housing Coordinator and After Care Specialist helped them obtain all of the things they needed to furnish their apartment such as new beds, mattresses, bedding, kitchen essentials, and more.

Because of the array of supportive services provided by YWCA Sojourner’s and the couple’s determination, this family is no longer homeless; they got a fresh start. They are economically stable and the family is in a home together for the first time in five years.

“After being homeless for over two years my family and I were beyond grateful to Sojourner’s for not only assisting in paying for our deposit and first month’s rent but for supplying us with beds and necessary things to help start us out. Our apartment is the first place our family can officially call a home.” - Laura

In the last year alone, YWCA Sojourner’s provided shelter and services for more than 614 homeless children and adults. By supporting YWCA Sojourner’s through fully tax deductible donations, donating items to the shelter, or by participating in Guys Night Out or Foodie Feast, you are providing a hand up, not a hand out! Visit ywcacharleston.org for how to get involved.
Leaders for Change corporate sponsorships sustain YWCA Charleston so that we can continue to serve the most vulnerable in our communities. Together, we work to promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. thank you!

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Soon after they were married, Kyle and Kirsten Mork sought out activities they could do as a couple that would make a difference in Charleston. They began making weekly visits to YWCA Sojourner’s Shelter for Homeless Women & Families to spend time with families struggling with homelessness, play with their children, provide some encouragement, and help make their weeks a little brighter.

Since that time, the Morks’ commitment to YWCA Charleston has only grown. Kirsten Mork conceptualized Foodie Feast and spearheads it each year to raise much-needed funds for Sojourner’s. Kyle Mork, now CEO of Greylock Energy, extended that commitment when Greylock Energy became a YWCA Leader for Change.

Kyle said, “The work the YWCA does in our community is critical. It provides sanctuary for those struggling with homelessness, a refuge for survivors of domestic violence, a community for those in need of friendship, and so much more.”

As a Leader for Change, Greylock can play a small role in helping meet those essential needs and I am proud we are helping Charleston continue to be a great place to live, work, and grow.”

According to Kyle Mork, Greylock Energy’s mission is to Produce and Deliver Energy That Powers Communities and Improves Lives. “When we talk about improving lives, we do not just mean those of our Team Members or our consumers - we also mean those living in the communities where we operate. It is why we have such a strong focus on safety and protecting the environment. It is why we invest so much in health and wellness for our Team Members. And, it is why we are so committed to supporting local, charitable organizations, like YWCA Charleston - because when businesses partner with great organizations, extraordinary things can happen.” said Mork.

On behalf of YWCA board, staff, and the people we serve, we thank Kyle & Kirsten Mork and Greylock Energy for being a Leader for Change! If your company is interested in deepening your commitment to the community through a once-annually multi-event sponsorship pledge for 2021, contact Shannon Lester, slester@ywcacharleston.org or by calling (304)-720-0541 for more information today.
Dr. Loretta Haddy was the State Epidemiologist from 1982 until she retired in 2019. She was the first director of the Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services (OEPS). As the director, she provided leadership and oversight for six divisions and served as the Principle Investigator for several federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) grants. Her assignments have included working with communicable disease control experts for the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and the state of West Virginia in collaboration with local health departments, health care providers, and facilities. She is a former Board President of YWCA Charleston and past Women of Achievement honoree.

In the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Haddy spent several days donating her time and expertise to visit each YWCA Charleston facility and meet with staff and clients to educate them and establish best practice protocols to keep everyone safe.

Thank you Dr. Haddy for keeping YWCA Charleston safe and informed!