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2016 SCHOOL
DIRECTORS GUIDE

BY BRIA BOLTON MOORE

illuminating gaps

YWCA TULSA USES 5K TO SHOWCASE GAPS IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS, WEALTH AND CIVIC EDUCATION

To Fatima Guerrero, YWCA Tulsa isn't an organization, it's people. YWCA is people who helped her learn English, people who walked with her through each arduous step of becoming a United States citizen, people she now calls friends, supporters, and even co-workers.

Guerrero and her husband lived apart for 13 years—he worked in the United States, and she worked in Mexico while raising their three children—until April 2007 when they were reunited to live together in the U.S.

Fatima's story could have been different. She could have become one of the women caught in a gap of wellness, wealth and education that YWCA Tulsa is working to highlight and ultimately eradicate.

The gaps are plenty. Here are a few: According to U.S. Census Bureau 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, for every dollar the average man makes, the average Latina earns 51 cents, the average foreign-born woman earns 53 cents, the average African American woman earns 63 cents, the average Native American woman earns 70 cents, and the average white woman earns 82 cents. A 2015 report by SpareFoot.com, which analyzed data from the U.S. Census Bureau, placed Tulsa in the bottom 10 metro areas in the nation for equitable pay for



FATIMA GUERRERO WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN.

men and women. Women hold only 14.1 percent of seats in the state legislature. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists heart disease as the number one killer of women, and the Oklahoma State Department of Health's 2014 State of the State's Health listed Oklahoma with the third highest rate of death due to heart disease in the nation.

On August 6, YWCA Tulsa will use the Close the Gap 5K as a spotlight, shining light on gaps such as these. The community event will include a timed and untimed 5K on a USATF-certified

course through the Brady District and Brady Heights historic district as well as a 100-yard kids dash for children 12 and younger. The downtown race festivities will include live entertainment, educational opportunities and "Cry Lady Hill," a special breaking-the-glass-ceiling celebration on a steep section of the race route on N. Denver Avenue. YWCA Tulsa previously held a 5K for the Girls On The Run program, but the program was closed due to 2016 budget concerns.

"It was really a perfect opportunity for us to step back and

look at what we want to promote in the community and what sort of impact we want to have with a community event like a 5K," said YWCA Tulsa Chief Executive Officer Vanessa Finley.

Funds raised will support YWCA Tulsa's four hallmark programs: Racial Justice and Civil Rights, Empowerment and Advancement of Women and Girls, Health and Safety of Women and Girls, and Immigrant and Refugee Empowerment.

Finley said the gaps hit close to home for many, so they've talked with many who are excited about the event.

"People's eyes light up, and
continued next page

they say, I know something I'd like to race for, a gap I've personally faced or my mother faced or that I don't want my daughters to face."

Finley said the primary goal of the 5K is to raise awareness. And what does she want Tulsans to do with the information?

"We hope they vote," Finley said. "We want an engaged, informed public that will vote for the interests that support their needs. And when we do that, as a community, we will have the representation we need to support our needs fully as a community."

Lindsay Jordan, YWCA Tulsa's director of communications and development, said it's important for people to not only hear the statistics but also take action.

"We want people to hear it, we want people to internalize it, and we want people to get up and do something about it, whether that's coming to the Close the Gap 5K or taking their kids to their polling place to vote on election day," Jordan said.

Jordan acknowledges that some people are in denial about the gaps women around them are experiencing.

"We hear from men and women: Well, that can't be true. Not my home, not my Oklahoma," she said. "People love where they call home, and they should, which is why it's so hard to hear these things. But, if we don't talk about them and raise awareness, nothing is going to change."

Thankfully, with YWCA support, Guerrero avoided many gaps.

"I was a professional in Mexico, a hair stylist," she said. "One person told me I could get my license here to work, but I had to translate my papers—license, diploma, all of it. Someone told me the YWCA would help."


After translation assistance, Guerrero took health classes and English courses. She began working at a YWCA in the drop-in childcare area and later participated in the Project Citizenship program to prepare to become a U.S. citizen.

Civic education is "the most


obvious gap that Fatima worked so hard to close," Jordan said. "Obtaining her citizenship ensured that her family no longer had to spend birthdays and anniversaries apart. It promised a more secure financial future for her children, a shot at a real college education and a home to call their own. It guaranteed that her family can never be forcefully separated by deportation or immigration reform; and it gives she, her husband, and her three children, all now 18 or older, the right to vote for candidates who they believe will continue to offer the American Dream to immigrant families just like theirs."

Not only did Guerrero steer away from many gaps, she is helping others do the same. She works full-time for YWCA, regularly helps Spanish-speaking visitors learn about what YWCA offers, and she also "works tirelessly on our Los Pecisitos ("little fishes" in Spanish) swim program designed specifically for Spanish-speaking children," Jordan said.

Her advice to women who feel like they're in a gap: "I want to tell them if they have some doubts in their life or they are not sure about what is their future, they should come here and just ask for information," Guerrero said. "The first mistake was that we didn't get information, good information. YWCA is a great place to get information for women."



YWCA Close the Gap 5K
Saturday, August 6
Guthrie Green
Registration Opens: 7:30 a.m.
Timed 5K 8:30 a.m.
Untimed 5K 8:40 a.m.
100-Yard Kids Dash 9:30 a.m.



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