

YWCA Offers One-of-a-Kind Program for Those Who Lose a Spouse



The Widowed Persons Program of the YWCA has been fulfilling the diverse needs of widowed persons for the past 22 years

Losing a loved one is one of the most profound emotional traumas one can experience. As an adult, the death of a spouse is particularly life-altering. While there is a need for immediate grief support, challenges often exist long after loss.

The Widowed Persons Program of the YWCA has been fulfilling the diverse needs of widowed persons for the past 22 years. It serves to address the many issues persons may face, providing immediate grief support as well as companionship for those who are widowed.

Linda Rose, Program Director for the Widowed Persons Program explains, "The program serves newly widowed men and women who are going through the grieving process. It provides mixed group support and one-on-one emotional support, plus resources

and referral information.” The program is also modeled on providing “mutual self-help” as participants find that talking with others in the same situation provides the greatest source of support.



*Skinner Appraisers to
bring Antiques Event
to New Bedford*

Providing social support is what Rose sees as particularly valuable. “Many program participants feel isolated and alone before coming to WPP. Many were caregivers for years and have lost contact with the outside world,” she says. “WPP provides a place for them to go and discuss their needs, make new friends, and discuss their problems with other people who care, listen, and understand.”

In addition, the program facilitates various trainings and presentations throughout the year. For many who are widowed, there may exist a sudden inability to complete certain daily tasks. For some, a deceased spouse may have handled all of the household’s financial matters. For others, the surviving spouse may not or may never have driven a car. Guest educators and presenters help teach new skills (e.g. using technology, paying bills, cooking, understanding finances, etc.).

Even beyond the grieving process, those who attend the Widowed Persons Program remain involved long after the initial stages of loss. Many later serve as outreach volunteers to help the newly widowed regain their sense of well-being. In addition, participants form lasting friendships and participate in

various activities together throughout the year.

“Twice a year, some of the widowed take a bus trip to Indian Head Resort in Lincoln, New Hampshire. Once a year they go to the Newport Play House. We have a non-denominational Memorial Service in August, a Social from April to October with music and a catered meal, and six support groups (via the Dartmouth and New Bedford Councils on Aging) after which some of the widowed go for either coffee or out to lunch,” Rose says. “And sometimes if one person hears of something going on in the community, they let the other know and a group will get together and attend the function.”



The special programs helps the newly widowed regain their sense of well-being.

When asked what she thinks makes the program particularly unique, Rose said, “WPP is the only program of its kind in this area. All other support groups in this area are for anyone grieving a loss of any kind.” The toll of losing one’s spouse often carries an additional burden and as a result, the program provides more than just a ‘support group’ setting. It offers trainings, outings to bond and form friendships, and creates a lasting foundation for companionship and support.

The Widowed Persons Program is just one of many community-based services offered by the YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts. The program is open to widowed persons of all ages who are going through the grieving process. There is no

fee for any service; however, voluntary donations are gratefully accepted.

Note from the Executive Director, Gail Fortes: The YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts is concluding a \$5.6 million Under One Roof capital campaign to fund the construction of a new 17,000 square foot LEED-certified building addition onto the historic Levi Standish House in New Bedford. Transporting the YWCA's programs to a new, specifically-designed building will have a significantly positive impact on the disadvantaged children enrolled in our childcare program, the at-risk women in our residential program, and every YWCA constituent. The new building will not only be central, providing services Under One Roof, but will offer appropriately-designed spaces, controlled and nurturing settings, and a handicap accessible center-city campus. As a result, the YWCA will better serve over 4,000 women and children annually within its expanded Levi Standish House in a more cost-effective manner.
