

WHAT IS A “LOCK OF COMPASSION”...

“What if a decorated lock could express your compassion and the hope it inspires begins to ripple...”

~Mary Alessio

Considering a lock is often defined as a device that restricts access and confines, you may wonder how it could possibly be associated with compassion. But, did you know a lock can also be a symbol of promise, enduring friendship and love? **A lock links and unites one to another.**

In many parts of the world “love locks” attached to bridges and even metal trees have expressed uniting one to another. The “Locks of Compassion” project will re-create that symbolic expression of unity in our community this summer by embracing a spirit of compassion! Locks decorated with signs, symbols, and words expressing

compassion will be prominently displayed on the “Locks of Compassion” community display in our

Peace Plaza. I have personally witnessed the transforming power of compassion in the lives of the poor and marginalized

served through Catholic Charities-Refugee Resettlement office in Rochester—a life-changing compassion!



A child recently asked me what it means to have compassion and I explained it in this way. **Compassion is a feeling inside of us that says, “I care about others—especially those who suffer and feel sad. In my heart, I want to help them.”** Compassion starts in the heart, but what if a decorated lock could express your compassion for a refugee child in need, a lonely senior, a friend in crisis, a visitor to our community...and the hope it creates begins to ripple....

This initiative is being embraced by community and civic leaders as a “game changer.” Healthcare professionals in Rochester have expressed delight and support of an interactive display that visitors will see upon arriving to Rochester for care; a display that symbolizes the compassion embraced in this part of the world. We hope the Rochester community display will be a life-changing experience for residents and all those who visit Rochester, Minnesota. Enjoy creating your lock. Compassion lives here...because of you!

While many of our children have joyful memories of chain link fences surrounding their school playgrounds and sports fields, I’ve seen refugee children who experience the devastation of war arrive with *vacant* stares and fearful eyes. Their memories of chained fences involve being locked away from safety and joy. I am looking forward to creating my personal lock—a lock in honor of those I serve; one that will replace fear with compassion!

This is a life-changing project for all residents and visitors who come to the city of Rochester—regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, or faith tradition. No matter where you come from or what you believe...**we can all be united around a spirit of compassion!**

We are honored to bring our vision to life for the community. It is because of the support of countless compassion partners in our great city that an idea envisioned months ago over a cup of tea is now a reality. This is your compassion display (you don't have to live in Rochester to be part of the ripple of compassion)—just as compassion grows within us when nurtured and put into action, the Rochester display will grow when you “lock in” your expression of compassion! Take pictures and share your experiences with family and friends on social media and see the hope it inspires ripple to other parts of our nation and world.

Please check out the many sponsors of this project when you visit the Peace Plaza! A special thanks to Rochester Area Builders for building the display and Fairway Signage for the beautiful graphics that “paint the picture” of compassion in our city. Join us for the opening ceremony at noon in the Peace Plaza on June 20th when Mayor Brede, Mayo Clinic and various community leaders and groups attach their locks of compassion to the community display.

Mary Alessio-Director of Advancement/Catholic Charities

www.locksofcompassion.org

**Please note Catholic Charities will have a booth on “Thursdays on First” with lock packages available for purchase and art supplies for your use in decorating your personal lock of compassion at craft tables. We have packages for groups interested in creating locks for display (507-287-2047). Individual lock packages are also most kindly available at Victoria's Restaurant and Tangerine Gift Shop starting June 20th.

** The community display will be located near the Peace Fountain in the Peace Plaza—Rochester, MN.—June 20th through August 30th closing ceremony and gifting of the display to the city. At that time a permanent Rochester location will be determined. All in Southern Minnesota are encouraged to visit the Peace Plaza this summer in order to create a ripple of compassion....

Proceeds of these lock packages with leather straps for personalizing with your key will provide help and create hope for the refugee children and their families served through Catholic Charities-Rochester Office.