

Butterfly Brilliance From a Caterpillar Crawl?

Hello Minnesota! Shorts, tank tops, barbecue, ice cream, sunglasses, flip-flops, and caterpillars! Did I say caterpillars? Yes, summer is on its way and so are those fuzzy, little creatures that show us that change is coming.

I don't know about you, but I have fond memories of lying belly down on a warm, summer sidewalk - face to face with a fuzzy caterpillar inching its way my direction. Do you remember the last time you held a caterpillar and felt it twirl its way around your fingertip; dreaming about the beautiful butterfly it would be transformed into one day?

It is difficult to imagine that a caterpillar will become a beautiful butterfly one day. As famed architect and inventor Richard Buckminster Fuller noted, "There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you and me it is going to be a butterfly." If you hold the caterpillar and butterfly of the same species next to each other, you might not even recognize any similarities.

In the original Greek language, the word use for transformation is metamorphosis. In essence that caterpillar is a life-changing symbol of transformation for you and me. The whole process of metamorphosis allows the little humble caterpillar to become a brilliant version and reach its full potential.

And once the transformation begins for the humble caterpillar there is no turning back—full potential will be reached and you will soon marvel at the beautiful butterfly in your midst. Fundamentally, when we are transformed to reach our full potential we are not meant to "go backwards"...there is no looking back at the old versions of ourselves. We are meant to move onward and upward!

Sadly, I also have memories of kids on the warm sidewalk abusing those fuzzy creatures and seeing the caterpillar instantly curl up—seemingly paralyzed by fright. It is at that point I remember my older brother pointing out a safe, grassy spot and my protective nature kicking in as I cradled my new found friend and brought it to safety in order to get it ready for change.

We are constantly reminded that in order to grow, we need to embrace change. But, as I visualize those caterpillars paralyzed by fright I see the faces



of those I have served and advocated for over the years at Catholic Charities.

I see the faces of families in crisis, vulnerable seniors, and children in desperate need; paralyzed by fright, heartaches, and struggles just inching their way to us; longing for that “life-changing” experience and the compassionate care that will transform their lives. Transformation is always an inside-out process for those we serve at Catholic Charities.

Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota is a social service arm in the twenty southern counties of Minnesota. We are close to those we serve with offices in Albert Lea, Austin, Mankato, Owatonna, Rochester, Winona, and Worthington. Because of the generous support of the people of southern Minnesota we don't just advocate on behalf of the poor and vulnerable who inch their way in our doors. Staff and volunteers tirelessly dedicate their lives, striving to see that transformation allows those we serve to reach their full potential.

In 2018, with the help of the people of southern Minnesota, we served 7,951 individuals; those broken in body and spirit. You helped transform the lives of over 1,500 more individuals than in the prior fiscal year. That is an incredible investment in compassion and a lot of butterfly moments!

There are countless success stories of those unexpected individuals in our midst who, when given the opportunity, end up working wonders in this world!

I grew up in a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. I am reminded of Abraham Lincoln's transformation. Lincoln incurred numerous losses both personally and politically. Four of his five children died before adulthood. He had a nervous breakdown. He was definitely in that caterpillar phase, crawling his way for years to reach brilliance as one of our nation's most famous leaders.

Rosa Parks inched her way onto that bus and refused to move; this helped fuel the long overdue metamorphosis in civil rights in our nation.

Early in his career Walt Disney spent an extended period in the caterpillar phase—he was bankrupt and homeless when he befriended a tame mouse. Mickey Mouse came to life and Walt Disney, much like his beloved Dumbo, took flight with butterfly brilliance and people today still marvel at what resulted from that metamorphosis.

At Catholic Charities we are firm believers that all life has dignity, especially the lives of the poor and vulnerable we serve. We are here to help turn those caterpillar challenges into butterfly brilliance. With seventeen programs serving all...yes, all regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, faith tradition, or ability to pay we are in a position to see brilliance as those who inch their way in our door leave renewed and transformed. “Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly.” ~Proverb

Next time you find yourself face to face with a fuzzy caterpillar I hope it reminds you that there is a butterfly within all of us. Your compassion for those we serve in southern Minnesota helps transform lives; helping those in need reach their full potential. Heartfelt thanks for bringing butterfly brilliance from a caterpillar crawl for those we serve. Visit www.ccsomn.org to learn more about services available for all.

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