



## A Briefing to Spirit Circle Members of Catholic Charities

Editor: Shanna Harris, Executive Director  
[www.ccsomn.org](http://www.ccsomn.org)

### SHANNA HARRIS—Executive Director of Catholic Charities

What a joy it is to come to Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota as the new Executive Director! Robert Tereba certainly left big shoes for me to fill and I am incredibly grateful to the dedicated staff of this agency as they have been both welcoming and accommodating. It is evident that the compassion inspired by the mission of Catholic Charities is alive within the staff as they have made me feel at home here.



I come to Winona from Casper, Wyoming where I was the Director of the Wyoming Food Bank of the Rockies for seven years. We distributed food to our partner agencies around the entire state. We also had mobile pantries and programs that helped children and families in need. Prior to my leadership at the Food Bank of the Rockies, I was the Executive Director of the United Way of Natrona County for approximately 11 years.

My passion to help those who are in need of the most basic services aligns with the mission of Catholic Charities.

As I was in transition, I researched food banks hiring a CEO and to my delight found great interest in a Catholic jobs website. Through God's grace and divine intervention, I feel I was directed to the position for Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota. I was drawn to this agency because of its impeccable reputation, but more importantly because it was evident to me that working for Catholic Charities is a profession that allows staff to "live their faith" each and every day as they serve the poor and marginalized.

It is such a privilege and blessing to gaze at the crucifix on the wall of my office and the rosary on my desk and know I am an instrument of God's grace in this new position.

It is my plan to be out in the diocese on a regular basis and it would be an honor to get to know you personally. In March, I plan to represent Catholic Charities as part of the Bishop's Curia at the deanery meetings. I will routinely travel the diocese and hope to meet many of you on my travels.

God bless you for your leadership as members of Spirit Circle. It is your compassionate generosity that both inspires and uplifts our mission in southern Minnesota.

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### Rochester Community Opens Hearts to Homeless— December 2019

On Wednesday, December 11, the Rochester Community Warming Center (RCWC) opened its doors for the first time. On the first night, 26 people came in from the cold to receive ten hours of shelter, a warm bed, hot coffee, and food.



The RCWC is the newest program of Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota; patterned after the Winona Community Warming Center (WCWC) which is in its 4<sup>th</sup> season of operation and also under the umbrella of Catholic Charities. The request from Olmsted County and the City of Rochester to open a Warming Center in Rochester came in August of 2019.

Olmsted County provided the building that is located at 200 4<sup>th</sup> St. SE. and led the way with the construction and remodeling to ensure the center would be able to open by December 2019. While the RCWC opened in December of 2019, the operating dates for the 2020-2021 season will be November 1<sup>st</sup>-March 31<sup>st</sup>. The City of Rochester provided a grant for season one to help with the cost of operations. The Warming Center will be open every night through March 31, 2020.

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The staff of the Warming Center includes a full time Coordinator who is responsible for the day to day operations of the Warming Center and four Night Shift Managers who staff the shelter during all hours of operation from p.m. to 7 a.m. The Warming Center also relies on dedicated volunteers who join staff to provide safety and consistency every night.

The operation of the Warming Center embraces the mission of the Catholic Charities to serve the poor and marginalized and is consistent with the Gospel call for all to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and welcome the stranger. (*Matthew Chap 25*)

If you would like to learn more or support the great work of the RCWC, please go to our website [www.ccsomn.org](http://www.ccsomn.org) for several great stories of compassion. Updates and detailed information can be found on the Warming Center program page.

<https://www.ccsomn.org/programs/warming-centers/rochester-community-warming-center/>



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## MARY'S KITCHEN TABLE

Mary Alessio, Director of Advancement answers questions around Mary's Kitchen Table.

**I recently read a few inspiring articles on the agency website. I wonder how staff deal daily with the heartaches and negative experiences of so many who come to Catholic Charities seeking help and still remain positive.**

I am honored to know you enjoyed some of the recent articles created for our website. In the sixteen years of serving at Catholic Charities, it has always been a blessing to watch my colleagues bringing life to our mission. I had the privilege to share weekly afternoon coffee breaks with Sr. Generose for many years at St. Mary's hospital. Many are familiar with her embracing the idiom, "Without money there is no mission...but, more importantly....without mission there is no money."



I firmly believe the fact that Catholic Charities staff are mission driven; embracing a **mission** each and every day that serves the poor and marginalized, advocates for social justice and calls all to embrace the ministry of Christ makes all the difference. It keeps them focused on being instruments of compassion. When we allow compassion to guide our choices, we are strengthened in body and spirit. We are more humble, patient, understanding, and kind-hearted. We judge less and love more. One of my favorite quotes comes from Saint Teresa of Calcutta—Mother Teresa often said, "When we judge others, we have no time to love them." Ironically, that positive attitude helps when it comes to alleviating burnout.

I am a firm believer that each person we meet can make a positive or negative impact on our lives. I recently read an article passed along to me from Dr. Amit Sood at Mayo Clinic. He had some great New Year advice I think you will enjoy. It addresses how to cope with negative encounters.

*"Our brain thinks about our past and future, but mostly it thinks about people—kind people, unkind people, brilliant people, people who help us and people who hurt us. Ironically, our brain is predisposed to invite the unkind people who hurt us, more than the kind people. Each person carves a unique space that is his or her temporary abode. When we host unkind people our brain suffers from anxiety, depression, chronic medical conditions, etc. When your brain hosts kind people, it feels secure, worthy, and loved. Compassionate people help us build stronger brains. Dr. Sood ended his article by reminding all to exercise a choice every day as to who we lease a part of our brain's real estate.....to spend more time thinking about the people who believe in us, inspire our efforts, and who are happy in our happiness."*

As I humbly watch so many dedicated staff in action, I believe staff of Catholic Charities embrace all that compassion stands for and that helps them do more than cope each day...it helps them change the lives of those they serve because they judge less and love more. This attitude helps them cope with the challenges of others heartaches. And because of your compassionate generosity they are able to transform their lives. God's blessings to you for a joyful 2020.

~Mary