

Rochester Couple Embrace “Rochester Cares” Campaign



I recently chatted with a friend over a warm cup of tea. The conversation was similar to most chats taking place in Minnesota on blustery January days—snow predictions, icy sidewalks, and wind chills. I think I even heard “Baby, it’s cold outside” echoing in the air!

I paused for a moment and thought about what it might feel like to deal with the brutality of winter in Rochester, Minnesota if I was faced with homelessness in addition to those wind chills. As I bundled up to face the elements, I envisioned myself as one of those wandering our streets this evening—no warm bed to lie my weary head, no cup of tea to warm winter’s chill, and no companionship. I felt utterly alone as that burst of cold air hit my face.

For many in Rochester the experience of homelessness is not something they envision—it is their reality. The Rochester Community

Warming Center facilitated by Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota opened their doors in December 2019 thanks to the helping hands of the City of Rochester, Olmsted County and Mayo Clinic’s collaboration with Catholic Charities. But, for the vision to become a reality beyond the initial months of service a call went out to our community for support!

This New Year brings new hope for the homeless in Rochester...because Rochester Cares. **Ron and Dianne Yanish have compassionately uplifted the Rochester Community Warming Center by kicking off the “2020 Rochester Cares Campaign” with a gift of \$100,000.00.**

Ron and Dianne have been long time supporters of Catholic Charities and the vulnerable served in our community. Their name is synonymous with compassionate generosity on behalf of those living on the margins. Ron and Dianne believe there are two key beliefs that guide their commitment to giving back. “Over and over, it has been made crystal clear the basics of life are important—love of God, family and friends, a commitment to integrity...and a commitment to leadership. The second belief is that the secret to happiness in life is being generous with time, talent, and treasure.”

What inspires this kind of compassion? And how do we keep that spirit alive in our community and our world?

I had the privilege of meeting with Ron and Dianne’s grandsons Alex and Joe on this cold winter day. After years of serving youth through Catholic Charities, I am convinced that their thoughts and

opinions are priceless. I thought perhaps they might have answers to my question. I was curious to find out what their thoughts were in regards to their grandparents philanthropic efforts.

Our conversation started with a good laugh as we discussed that “philanthropy” was a lofty word to describe one’s simple “love for mankind.” Alex proceeded to tell me that it did not come as a surprise that his grandparents made a significant gift to sustain the Warming Center without making it a “big deal” to all. He said something he admired about his grandparents was their unmaterialistic nature and the fact that their generosity is motivated by love and not glory. He and Joe reminisced about sleepovers with their Papa and Grandma—playing football in their kitchen and being reminded to pray each night before they hopped in bed in order to thank God for his blessings.

Joe enthusiastically mentioned that his grandparents remind all in the family to be grateful every single day and to live by the words on the plaque at their cabin... “Never, never, never give up!!” He proudly mentioned his hope to emulate his Papa who always makes him smile and see the silver lining in life, regardless of challenges. He often hears his grandparents remind family members that “Nothing is impossible with God.”

I asked Joe and Alex to think of three words that would describe their grandparents and they thoughtfully pondered the question before sharing. **Compassion** - because they always remind them to put themselves in the other’s guy’s shoes, **Humility** - because they give God the credit for the opportunities to do good works in this world, and **Fortitude** - because they reach within for strength during times of hardships and challenges.

I left my visit with Ron and Dianne’s grandsons on that frigid winter day feeling an enormous sense of warmth and goodwill—the kind of warmth Ron and Dianne will provide for the homeless in Rochester in years to come... because of their compassionate generosity. These young men humbled me with their maturity and words of wisdom. They ended by telling me that they have experienced their grandparents’ generous spirit on numerous occasions. “Papa and Grandma have gifted us with opportunities, especially when it comes to our education. But with those opportunities we are reminded comes responsibility to use them in order to make the world a better place.”

At Catholic Charities we strive to provide the poor and vulnerable with those opportunities to reach their full potential. Thank you Ron and Dianne for breathing life into our mission and making the world a better place!

Submitted by:

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