

A publication of



MERRICK

Community Services

Growing. Stronger. Together.

“Hunger Relief Comes Marching In...”

Help support
Minnesota's
largest
grassroots
food drive.

Last year, more than 10,000 families walked through the doors of the Merrick Food Shelves, all seeking the same thing: the basic necessities and resources that many of us don't have to think twice about. These families consist of parents, children, friends, and coworkers that have not had the same advantages and opportunities that many of us take for granted.

This is an especially familiar experience for our friend Moussa, a Merrick participant who came to the Woodland Hills Food Shelf after suffering a traumatic brain injury that forced him to withdraw from graduate school.

“I went from referring people to the food shelf to being a client of the food shelf... And I had to find ways to access resources just in order to live.”

Hunger is an epidemic in America. More specifically, one in ten Minnesotans experience food insecurity during their lives. These numbers are far more concentrated on the East Side of Saint Paul and Maplewood, which continue to experience some of the highest poverty rates and social challenges in the state. Despite Merrick's ongoing hunger relief efforts, this problem still remains in our community.

This March, Merrick will partner with dozens of local businesses, churches, and philanthropists to ensure all residents have access to healthy foods. With the help of our committed staff and hundreds of dedicated volunteers; as well as many funders, donors, partners and

other supporters, we will seek to close the hunger gap by serving our community with compassion and respect for the innate dignity of every individual and family we are privileged to serve.

We hope you will join us in this fight against hunger by donating to this year's March Food Drive, which is part of the statewide Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign. Whether it's dedicating your time at one of our two food shelf locations, or making a charitable contribution to our cause, we cannot fight this battle alone.

Thank you for your ongoing generosity and support. We could not do it without you!

With much appreciation and gratitude,

Daniel A. Rodriguez
Executive Director



#FoodForAll

Support Merrick's March Food Drive during the Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign

Each March, Minnesotans rally together to support food shelves and help those who are hungry. Merrick's food shelf relies on strong food and cash donations in March to keep the shelves stocked throughout the year. We're calling on **businesses, congregations, and individuals** to fight hunger on the East Side by donating food and funds. There are so many ways to get involved.

BUSINESSES



Donate a portion of sales for a day or week.

Host friendly competitions between departments.

Offer employee incentives for donations (pancake breakfast, ice cream social, wear jeans on Friday).

Put a donation jar at the register.

Invite customers to round up their bill to make a donation.

Organize a March Madness bracket among staff.

CONGREGATIONS



Host a spaghetti dinner or a bake sale and donate the proceeds.

Take up a special offering or donate a percentage of the offering.

Plan a special message or Bible study to raise awareness of hunger.

Participate in Pack the Pews Weekend (mnfoodshare.org/packthepews).

Set out barrels or boxes to collect food donations.

INDIVIDUALS



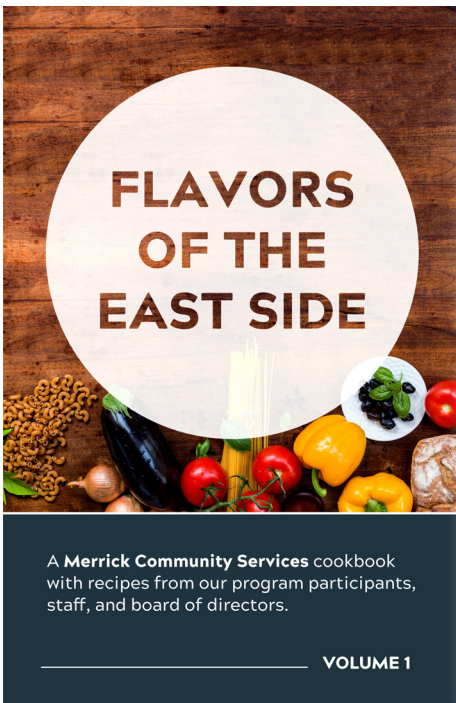
Donate nonperishable food and hygiene items.

Make a cash donation.

Start a food or fund drive with your family, friends, workplace, church, school or neighborhood.

Volunteer at Merrick's food shelf.

Contact Samantha Soriano at ssoriano@merrickcs.org to sign up for volunteer shifts.



From February 26 - April 4, 2018, all proceeds from **Flavors of the East Side: A Merrick Community Services Cookbook** benefit the March Food Drive.

Inside, you'll find 32 favorite recipes from Merrick Community Services staff, volunteers, board members, and Food Shelf participants.

Make a donation of at least \$10 to receive a digital copy of **Flavors of the East Side**. Get your copy today at give.merrickcs.org/cookbook.

Interested in receiving a hard copy of the cookbook? Contact Samantha Soriano at ssoriano@merrickcs.org or call 651-771-9339 for more info.

FOOD SHELF ITEMS WISH LIST

Merrick Community Services distributes food and basic-needs items to about 150 families on the East Side each week. We use a client choice model, allowing people to choose the foods that work best for them. The following items are in high demand:

Breakfast Foods • Rice • Pasta • Canned Chicken/Tuna • Coconut Milk
Culturally Specific Foods • Hygiene Products • Diapers • Baby Food

STRETCH YOUR DONATION

Make the most of your gift to Merrick's March Food Drive by donating cash instead of food.

Merrick's food shelf has access to a variety of discount products and programs, which help us make your gift go further and feed more families on the East Side.

Stretch your donation by making a gift today at give.merrickcs.org.

YOUR \$10 VS. YOUR FOOD SHELF'S \$10



Food Shelf Upgrade in the Works Through SuperShelf Partnership



Merrick Community Services' Food Shelf was one of eight food shelves selected from a group of more than 50 applicants to participate in a two-year evaluation and transformation process through [SuperShelf](#).

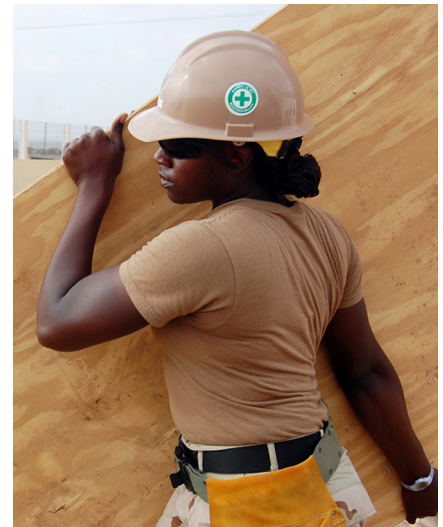
SuperShelf was developed by four founding partners: HealthPartners, Valley Outreach, The Food Group, and the University of Minnesota Extension and Department of Family Medicine and Community Health.

Their mission is to transform food shelves, creating welcoming environments for communities to access appealing, healthy food. SuperShelf will work with Merrick to:

- Create a food shelf environment that is client-centered, promoting and respecting individual choice.
- Increase access to a variety of healthy, culturally appropriate food.
- Apply behavioral economic principles that promote healthy food choices.
- Create an appealing environment by transforming the physical space.
- Meet specific SuperShelf standards, methods, and values.
- Make the healthiest choice the easiest choice for all.

The first year of the process will be focused on evaluation, and the second year will be focused on transformation.

Stay tuned for more updates about these exciting improvements to our Food Shelf program.



FREE CONSTRUCTION TRAINING

Now accepting applications!

There are about **40** enrollment spaces available for the **Spring 2018 cohort**.

Classes will begin in **April, 2018** and run for for about **eight weeks: M-F, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm**. The training will conclude with a graduation ceremony.

Info sessions will be held every Wednesday starting February 21. **Participants must attend an info session prior to enrollment.**

Enrollment requirements:

- High school diploma or GED
- Valid driver's license
- Demonstrated basic math and reading skills
- Ability to pass a drug test

For more information, contact Robert Taylor, Employment Services Manager, at rtaylor@merrickcs.org or 651-219-5555.

Merrick Staff in the Spotlight: Robert Taylor, Employment Services Manager



“It’s not about slapping on a band-aid and ignoring all that other stuff. I try to look at things holistically.”

– Robert Taylor

Robert Taylor is a community leader, dog person, and challenger of the status quo.

Before he came to Merrick, he worked as an employment counselor/empowerment coach at Northpoint. He has also held various career counseling and employment development positions at Resource, Inc., Project for Pride in Living, Goodwill Easter Seals MN, Partnership Resources, Inc., and Community Involvement Programs. He was a recipient of the Goodwill-Easter Seals Mission Services STAR Performer Award and the National ASPE Supported Employment Professional of the Year Award; and was nominated for the Community Involvement Programs Listener, Learner, and Leader Award.

Robert first entered the social services field by working with individuals with disabilities. For years, he cared for his brother, who struggles with persistent mental illness. “That was very significant,” says Robert. “I

learned compassion in a different way. I learned patience in a different way. I learned about human complexities in a different way.”

In his new role, Robert is excited to help East Siders connect with steady employment, but he knows that real stability is about more than finding a job. “I’m looking forward to assessing what the real needs are,” he says.

“I know that sometimes people come in here and they’re in crisis mode. They’re not trying to hear about behavioral health and they’re not trying to hear me say, ‘here are some resources.’ They need a quick fix. ‘Give me a job.’ But then the conversation needs to take place: how do we effectively move you from this? We can’t get you from here to stabilization unless these issues are addressed.”

“It’s not that simple, when you’re dealing with compounded trauma—generational trauma.

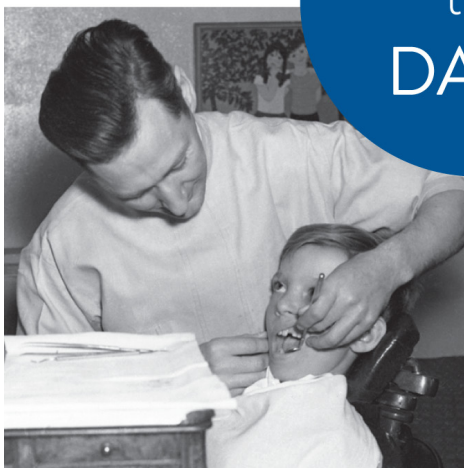
It’s not about slapping on a bandaid and ignoring all that other stuff. I try to look at things holistically.”

An East Sider himself, Robert is invested in the community and aware of the barriers many East Siders face. He wants to engage with local businesses, finding out what work is available and what kind of training is needed for those positions. He wants employers to be held accountable for hiring within the community.

Outside of work, Robert is active in his church and is pursuing a degree in Biblical studies. He has a dog named Isaiah and is a doting “dog uncle” to his sister’s canines.

For him, the desire to help and advocate for people runs deep, and he sees his work as a sort of ministry.

“I’m very passionate about what I do,” he says. “I love the East Side.”



SAVE
the
DATE

Celebrating 110 Years

For more than 110 Years, Merrick Community Services has proudly served the East Side of Saint Paul, helping families obtain the resources necessary to strengthen families and promote their independence.

Honoring its commitment as the longest-serving East Side social services non-profit, Merrick will be commemorating its 110 year anniversary during its 2018 events and would love for you to be a part of the celebration!

Historical photos courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

PLEASE JOIN US AT THESE UPCOMING EVENTS:

Volunteer Recognition & Awards

An evening of music, cocktails, and stories in appreciation of the 800+ volunteers and partners that have helped Merrick serve the East Side of Saint Paul for more than 110 years.

merrickcs.org/volunteerevent

Thursday, April 12th, 2018

5:30 p.m.

The Church of St. Pascal Baylon
1757 Conway Street, Saint Paul

5th Annual Momentum Breakfast

A gourmet breakfast with inspiring stories from program participants followed by Merrick's Breakfast Scramble Golf Tournament.

merrickcs.org/breakfast

Friday, May 18, 2018

Breakfast from 7:30-9 a.m.
at 1669 Arcade Street North,
Saint Paul

Golf Tournament immediately
following at Phalen Golf Course,
1615 Phalen Drive East

5th Annual Merrick Mix & Mingle

A cocktail-style social gathering of 200+ philanthropists, community leaders, organizational partners, and friends of Merrick.

merrickcs.org/mmm

Friday, October 11, 2018

Venue TBA



Healthy Eating Series Makes Wellness Fun and Social

Older Americans face particular challenges when it comes to accessing fresh, nutritious meals. Transportation needs, social isolation, and the stigma of seeking services can create barriers that make it more difficult for seniors to enjoy good food.

According to Feeding America's [2017 Senior Hunger Fact Sheet](#), 8% of households with seniors age 65+ are food insecure. The number of seniors facing hunger is projected to increase by 50% by 2025.

Seniors who lack consistent access to nutritious food are at increased risk for chronic health conditions such as depression, heart problems, and asthma.

Lack of social interaction is just as risky. The AARP Foundation's [Connect2Affect](#) initiative equates the health

risk of prolonged isolation with smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Merrick's Senior Services program is always seeking new ways to help East Side seniors stay healthy and connected. Recently, the program hosted a healthy eating series aimed at supporting seniors with making healthy food choices, managing a food budget, and sustaining heart health.

At the first meeting of the series, participants talked about trying to eat a variety of colorful foods and discussed how to read labels. Then they worked together to prepare a meal of taco salads made with plenty of fresh produce like bell peppers, cilantro, and lettuce.

At the end of the day, satisfied with their work, they sat around a table together and enjoyed the meal.



Troop #53155 Makes Valentine's Day Surprises for Meals on Wheels Recipients

In addition to volunteering at the Food Shelf in mid-February, Senior Girl Scout Troop #53155 (high school 9th and 10th graders) made Valentine's Day cards for each Meals on Wheels recipient.

Thank you, ladies, for going above and beyond to make Valentine's Day extra sweet.





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MERRICK BY THE NUMBERS

1,337

Youth served at the 2018 Holiday Share Celebration—nearly twice the number of students enrolled at John Glenn Middle School.

6,091

Pounds of food donations collected by the Holiday Lights on York Ave in December—the weight of 17.5 of Santa's reindeer!

98

The age of the oldest current Merrick participant, which is still 12 years younger than the agency.

9.2

Jobs created per mile of highway construction. In its next cohort, Merrick's Construction Training Program will train 4 miles' worth of construction workers.