

GATEWAY

FEBRUARY 2023
NEWSLETTER

It's Time to be UpLift(ed) Again!



Plans are underway for our annual **UpLift Fundraising Event**, Tuesday, May 2, 2023. Check-out sponsorship opportunities on the MCS website, where you can sign-up for one of our sponsorship tiers or request additional information. We hope to add to our current sponsors: Sunstream Business Solutions, Xcel Energy, BWBR, M Health Fairview Foundation, Upper River Services, LLC, The Vomela Companies, Stagetime Productions, Ecolab, and Party Time Liquors. If your business, faith community, or family would like to join as a sponsor, we'd be delighted to help you do so!



We're excited to host UpLift at the **JX Venue** in downtown Stillwater. Guests will be treated to a great program, good food and drinks, and will have several opportunities to learn about and support Merrick's important work. This promises to be a fun night you won't want to miss. Look for an e-invitation next month, to register for this in-person event and to bid on fabulous auction items. We hope to see you at UpLift and invite you to bring along family, friends, and co-workers to ensure a successful fundraiser. ■

Get involved:

Please contact **Kate Kelly** at kkelly@merrickcs.org or call **651-219-5557** with any questions or to discuss a partnership with MCS.

merrickcs.org/uplift



March Food Drive

Do you shop for groceries once a week? Twice a week? Or are you an “It’s any everyday thing” kind of shopper? Merrick invites shoppers to our Arcade Food Shelf for in-person shopping two days a week and for drive-up orders two other days a week. And you may be wondering...how do we get enough food into the Arcade Food Shelf? The answer is: YOU!

March is Minnesota FoodShare month

– that means we are relying on partners and neighbors like you to help us bring food into the food shelf. You can support the March Food Drive with food donations and monetary contributions in three ways:

1.

Bring your non-perishable food items to Merrick at Arcade on Mondays, 3 pm – 5 pm or Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday between 10 am – 12 pm. If you’re not sure what is needed most, check out the details on our website at: <https://merrickcs.org/march-food-drive-2023/>

2.

Drop food at one of the barrels located around the East Side, Regions Hospital, St. Pascal’s Bayon Catholic Church, Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church and Mississippi Market on East 7th Street.

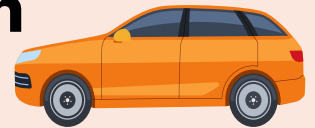
3.

Make a contribution to Merrick earmarked for the March Food Drive. You can do this anytime on our website: give.merrickcs.org/marchfooddrive2023

While we welcome food, contributions, and volunteer support ALL YEAR for our Food Shelf operations, we are just competitive enough that we like to have a winning edge when others around Minnesota are also participating in Minnesota FoodShare Month. Food Donations and Monetary Contributions will be accepted March 1 – April 14. Funds raised during this time directly supports our Food Budget, to provide healthy, nutritious food options to East Side residents year-round. This has become even more important, as the cost of food has risen dramatically. ■



Meals on Wheels



Do you have an extra hour to help an East Side neighbor? Join the Meals on Wheels Volunteer Team!

Merrick Meals on Wheels is currently looking for drivers to donate a minimum of one hour a month to deliver meals to our vulnerable and senior neighbors who are facing food insecurity. More and more of our senior population needs our help and we currently do not have enough drivers to handle our existing routes (or create more routes) to ensure everyone who needs a hot meal can get one! Our current volunteers occasionally complete two routes at a time to make sure all of the food is delivered. We would like to expand our routes to get more food out there!

We are looking for dedicated volunteers to make this happen!

Can you help? Please go to www.merrickcs.org/volunteer and sign up to be a Meals on Wheels driver or call **Maria Molina**, Meal on Wheels Lead, at (651) 219-5531.

Merrick Welcomes New Staff

Merrick is fortunate over the last few months to have acquired several new talented, dedicated Staff. They all bring a lot of enthusiasm and energy and great work experience to their jobs and those they serve. We are a stronger Agency because of them.

Here are a few tidbits of new MCS Staff Members.



Turi Svennevig-Brosi, Manager of Employment and Career Services, comes from both sides of the non-profit and for-profit fence. She has held leadership positions in Human Services and manufacturing and found that the next logical stop for her was to get back to serving others. Her past experiences in corporate settings and her extended relationships in the business community will be a great asset to helping our participants find employment.

Crystal Friedman, Manager of Family & Community Services, is an experienced non-profit professional having worked in Operations and Management for Breaking Free and the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center. She jumped into her first month at Merrick with the heavy task of leading our Holiday Share event, and she did it with brilliance, as if she had done it many times over. Her gift of organization and being a "datahead" keeping track of over 600 participant registrations made for a smooth event.



Amy Votel, Development Manager & Event Coordinator, landed at Merrick through volunteer work in the non-profit sector but worked in manufacturing and product sales for many years. Volunteering this past Fall at Merrick's Backpack event confirmed to her that working to serve others was the passion that would fill her heart. Amy said that sales in the profit world can easily be translated to development, they both involve building relationships and that's what she loves to do.

As we have strengthened our direct service staff in the past year, we are particularly blessed to have individuals who care deeply about our work, bring a wealth of skills and expertise, particularly in areas of importance to Merrick, like human trafficking, domestic violence, human service program design, and housing navigation. We are also so happy to have staff fluent in Hmong and Spanish languages, to serve our East Side participants.



Patrick Thomas, Office Manager, has been an Administrative Assistant and served in a variety of other roles in non-profits and retail settings. He prides himself in being well-organized. You'll meet him at your next visit to our Arcade location.



Leo Jackson, Youth Project Coordinator, joins Merrick with a long career in education in Saint Paul. His experience working with youth as a High School Transition Advisor will be an asset to Merrick to assist our youth in continuing education, employment and navigating job prospects to better their future outcomes. He also brings program design and strategic planning work for Saint Paul Public Schools. We are happy to have Leo back (he started his career here) so he can build more relationships with the youth of the East Side!



MERRICK
Community Services
Growing. Stronger. Together.

Helping East Side Neighbors – and Ourselves – Settle In Comfortably

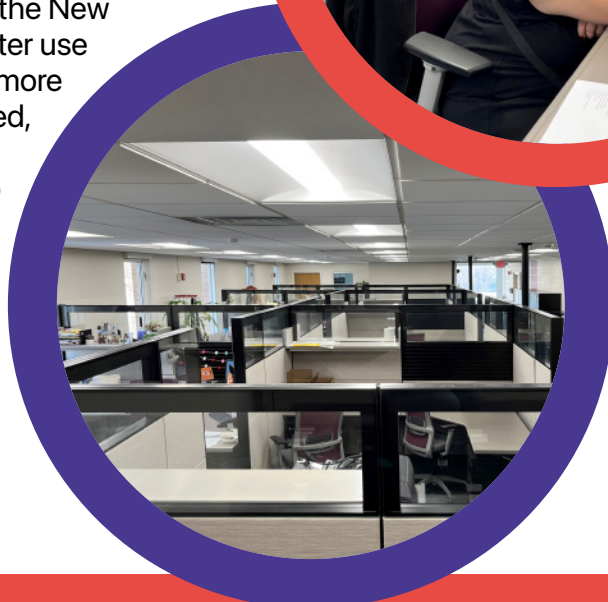
Welcome Home Kits

A big part of our work in Family & Community Services is helping people transition to affordable housing, often from precarious housing arrangements or homelessness. In partnership with Greater Twin Cities United Way, Merrick received 50 Welcome Home Kits filled with essential supplies for families and individuals transitioning to stable housing. They contain items such as utensils, dish soap, hygiene products, bandages, hangers, light bulbs, cleaning supplies, and more. As we help people move into new housing, we're making good use of Welcome Home kits so that families can have these essentials handled as they help their families get comfortable in secure, new spaces.



New Office Furniture

And sometimes, Merrick staff get to be welcomed home again – making our own space more useful, beautiful, and secure! Our partners at Ecolab recently provided Merrick with beautiful new office furniture. The new cubical walls and desks arrived the first week of January and by the very next week, staff had new work stations to settle into and start the New Year. The new arrangement creates a better use of space, and is flexible in offering a little more opportunity to work in teams when needed, as well as providing greater privacy with higher cubicle walls. Thank you to Ecolab for outfitting us with a new space for 2023!



A Message From Dan Rodriguez,

Merrick Community Services Executive Director

115 Years and Counting...

What began in 1908 as the **Christ Child Society** of Saint Paul in Railroad Island has evolved into the present-day **Merrick Community Services**, serving individuals and families on the East Side of Saint Paul (and beyond) for 115 years and counting.

Mary Virginia Merrick was a remarkable, phenomenal force of nature, who some say was equal in impact to Helen Keller. In fact, Archbishops have publicly announced their belief that someday Ms. Merrick may be beatified and declared a Catholic Saint.

A little bit about Mary Virginia Merrick is worth noting. She was born in 1866 and died in 1955. Following a tragic accident as a teenager, she was confined to a wheelchair. She weighed perhaps 80 pounds, her legs were paralyzed, and her body was encased in a heavy steel and leather jacket extending up over her broken back to behind her head. Despite these challenges, Merrick launched one of the most impactful efforts to benefit children in the history of Washington, D.C.: The Christ Child Society.

In 1908, Mrs. Margaret Quinlan met Ms. Merrick in Washington D.C. and she was so impressed with the work she witnessed there that when she returned to Saint Paul she organized a new Saint Paul Chapter of the Christ Child Society, with the intention of replicating similar work here. The work in Saint Paul began in a small, two-room house in the yard of the old St. Ambrose Church on the lower Eastside.

In 1990, the Board of Directors reorganized the Saint Paul Christ Child Society and converted it to Merrick Community Services (MCS), to honor Mary Virginia Merrick.

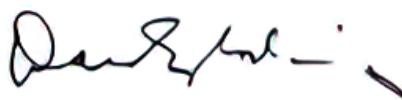
Perhaps one of MCS' greatest assets is its ability to adapt to the many changes that have occurred over the past 115 years. As the make-up of the East Side has changed and the needs of residents have changed, MCS has been and will continue to be a steadfast organization that continues to assist those in need on the East Side and beyond.

Like most employers, one of the biggest challenges we have faced recently has been staffing. We are intentional about finding people with the skills we need and who also have life experiences that reflect our program participants, the languages they speak, share their race and ethnicity, and also understand their challenges and struggles. I invite you to read elsewhere in this publication to learn more about our new staff, who we have enthusiastically welcomed into the Merrick Family.

We could use your help in getting the word out about our need for more volunteers to support our Meals on Wheels Program. If interested, please contact Maria Molina in our Meals on Wheels office at **651-219-5531** or **mmolina@merrickcs.org**.

Finally, I respectfully invite your continued support for Merrick. Please read more about our March Food Drive and UpLift, our Spring Fundraiser. As always, your involvement and participation are critical to our success, to help us provide the deep support our East Side neighbors need and deserve.

Warmest Regards,



Daniel A. Rodriguez
Executive Director

"Thank you, again, for your ongoing support and generosity that allows Merrick Community Services to provide hope and help for over 115 years on the East Side and beyond."

- Daniel Rodriguez

Merrick Navigates MNSure

When it comes to insurance we all know that it can be a difficult process to find, register and pour through all the options that are offered today. Imagine if you are brand new to the United States, about to be a teen mother or a person within the Senior population that needs a little extra help. Merrick has been part of a program that assists people with the MNSure platform. Recently, Merrick Staff have been able to help several people register and find affordable insurance. Here are just a few words from them about their experience:

Thank you so much for your assistance and recommendation that I find a broker. I am now getting enrolled in a much needed, better dental program and have gotten the answers to help make better decisions going forward.

Again, thank you for your time and wisdom, Veronika

Thank you so much for your help yesterday navigating MNSure. That additional information got me on the right track was able to get everything resolved with Ramsey County.

Successful Public and Foundation Grants

Individual giving is key to our fundraising capacity. Your individual unrestricted gifts help us raise much-needed program and operating funds from philanthropic and public sources. In the fourth quarter of 2022, MCS received several general operating grants from the following Foundations:

CLA Foundation, Hardenbergh Foundation, Saint Paul Foundation, F.R. Bigelow Foundation, & Mardag Foundation

Merrick is delighted to part of Ramsey County's new Learn & Earn grant program! The program is focused on serving 18-30 year-olds in meaningful career pathways, and allows for participants to have paid work experiences during the program, along with occupational training.

Merrick will be operating one program, in partnership with the Latino Economic Development Center, focusing on entrepreneur training and business start-up opportunities. Participants may have a business idea they are already pursuing; or, may explore opportunities in franchised or licensed businesses that are part of a bigger enterprise. Merrick will also be operating another program, in partnership with Hired and the Karen Organization of Minnesota, focusing on pathways in human services occupations, with careers in nonprofit and public agencies.

With both opportunities, participants will have paid work experiences with businesses and organizations operating in their fields of choice, and then launch businesses and/or obtain long-term employment. If you know of East Side residents between 18-30 years old who might benefit from this opportunity, reach Merrick's Employment & Career Services staff. ■

Holiday Share

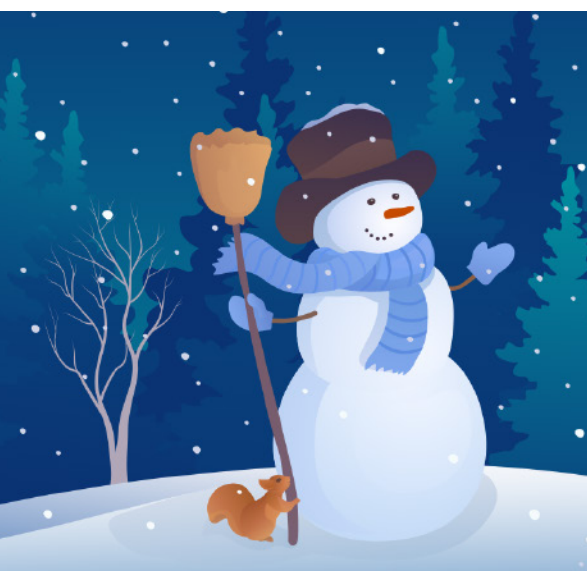
Holiday Share Toy Distribution 2022

Merrick Community Services shared winter holiday spirit with the East Side of Saint Paul community at our annual Holiday Share toy distribution event on December 17th and December 19th! It was a successful two-day event that allowed families to shop for toys for their children and find out more about the services Merrick provides. This year, we were able to giveaway over 2,800 toys to 600 families!

Since COVID, we have experimented with different ways to make this event smooth and successful. This year, we offered a quick walk-through arrangement for families to choose their toys as well as an option for drive-up distribution. As always, Merrick staff and volunteers made it work for families in the best way possible. We were able to distribute toys, some household goods, fresh produce and COVID test kits from our food shelf.

We want to give a big shout-out to all our volunteers who gave a total of 400 hours to help ensure a successful event. We had volunteers from ResCare Community Living, SunStream Business Services, 3M, CHS, Inc., Beckman Coulter, AFS East Metro Area Team, MCS board members, and the East Side community help us organize, bag, and distribute toys as well as decorate our distribution spaces. We could not have done it without all of you!

And of course, we relied on generous business sponsors who provided financial support to purchase toys and gift cards. (listed below) ■





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with
Us!**



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Stay up to date on our website: www.Merrickcs.org

Merrick Community Services is very grateful to the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation for a continuing Challenge Match, contributing dollar-for-dollar, \$75,000 to match other Merrick donors. This incentive has helped us with individual and organizational funding for multiple years now.

