



MERRICK

Community Services
Growing. Stronger. Together.

Merrick Stands with Our Community

Merrick Community Services mourns the tragic and avoidable deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. We implore ICE to leave Minnesota, and we remain dedicated to supporting and protecting our neighbors. See below for MCS' full statements on the recent ICE events.

[Merrick's Statements on ICE](#)

Save the Date: March Food Drive!

The 45th Annual Minnesota Food Share Campaign



Merrick needs YOUR support! Our Food Shelf distributed over 890,000 pounds of food to Ramsey County families last year, and we want to offer even more this year. We will be tracking donations during the campaign, with a goal of raising **\$30,000 and 5,000 pounds of food.**

If you are interested in having a food collection box or barrel at your place of work, living community, or anywhere else please reach out to Amy Votel at avotel@merrickcs.org. For more information and to donate visit our [website](#).

[March Food Drive 2026](#)

New Staff: Shanika Hatcher

Merrick is thrilled to welcome new team member, **Shanika Hatcher**, as our MFIP Employment Counselor. Shanika started with MCS in early January, 2026. In her previous role she also worked with MFIP (MN Family Investment Program) as a Career Counselor at Avivo. She has also been an Adult and Family Case Manager at Union Gospel Mission and Customer Service Representative at Greater Twin Cities United Way. Shanika has additional experience in various roles at nonprofit agencies in Minneapolis, Duluth, and Milwaukee. We are thrilled to have Shanika on the Merrick team!



New Board Member: Jade Otoya



Please join us in welcoming Jade Otoya to Merrick's Board of Directors! Jade is a Program Assistant at Minnesota Homeownership Center ("The Center") where she provides support to the Grants & Compliance team and maintains communications with partner organizations across Minnesota, among other tasks. She is eager to serve on Merrick's Board and feels deeply connected to our mission, and how community service programming can transform lives. Welcome, Jade!

MCS Receives OpenAI Foundation Grant

Merrick is excited to be one of the grantees of the initial OpenAI Foundation's People-First AI Fund. Through this Fund, we received an impactful, unrestricted grant to advance our mission through community innovation while exploring AI tools. Across the nation, 208 nonprofits were funded through the \$40.5 million initiative. At Merrick, we are looking forward to the possibilities that this grant offers, as we continue to adapt our program delivery to best serve our participants. Read more about the OpenAI Foundation's People-First AI Fund [here](#)!

[OpenAI Blog Post](#)

Thank You Schultz Family Lights!

Another Year of Spreading Joy and Supporting Merrick



Merrick is grateful to the Schultz Family Lights/Holiday Lights on York Ave hosts, Doug and Laura Schultz. Yet another year of captivating light and music shows, and another year of supporting Merrick with food and cash donations offered by visitors. They have been donating food to Merrick since 2008, and we couldn't be more appreciative for their support of Merrick and the East Side!

Prepare and Prosper Free Tax Assistance

P+P provides free tax preparation and financial services to individuals making \$40,000 or less and families with income of \$70,000 or less. All tax returns are prepared by IRS-certified volunteers attending extensive training through P+P.

Service delivery this year will be an in-person model by appointment only. Customers can call **651-287-0187** to schedule an appointment or make an appointment online at: prepareandprosper.org. No walk-in customers will be accepted.

PREPARE + PROSPER

WORKING TOWARD A BRIGHTER FINANCIAL FUTURE

[More Information Here](#)

Upcoming Events

- **MCS CLOSED Monday, February 16th**
 - In observance of Presidents' Day
- **March Food Drive**
 - March 1 - April 6, 2026. Keep an eye out for link to donate and support our Food Shelf!
- **Volunteer Appreciation Event**
 - Thursday, April 9th, 2026, Merrick Community Services (registration not yet open)
- **Merrick Spring Fundraiser**
 - Tuesday, May 5th, 2026, Merrick Community Services (registration not yet open)

[Click Here to Donate](#)

[Click Here to Volunteer](#)

[Click Here for Planned Legacy Giving](#)



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