



MERRICK
Community Services
Growing. Stronger. Together.

What a Night at UpLift 2026!



Carlyn Grande,
Community Health Coordinator
with HealthPartners, enjoying
the evening!

It was a fabulous night at Merrick Community Services on May 5th, 2026. Our halls were filled with over 150 attendees learning about what we do, and *where* we do the good work each and every day. Stepping into the Story and our “Hollywood” theme brought out big smiles, fabulous eyewear, dashing for desserts and incredible success stories from staff and participants!



We thank all of you for coming to the event, raising money, jumping online to our silent auction and celebrating the night with us. A special thank you to our sponsors, emcees, staff, and volunteers, we could not have done it without your help!

Participant Feature: Briana on Support Through Transitions



Briana, Marissa, and Briana's daughter at UpLift 2026!

One of the best parts of UpLift is getting to hear participant stories and reflect on the positive impact of Merrick's work.

Merrick participant Briana has been working closely with Marissa Ruff, Parent Educator in our At Home Family Education Program (AHFEP). In the past year Briana experienced a number of big life transitions: moving, becoming pregnant, and growing a family.

Briana shared with Marissa how much the extra funding and resources have helped ease the daily pressures of parenting and for her, “The biggest thing for me was that you guys stayed with me during my move to Minneapolis.” Throughout the process, Merrick's support made it feel like she wasn't having to start over or navigate services alone.

Sometimes that support looked like essentials: diapers, wipes, baby food, and books, and other times its the moments you can't put a price on—encouragement, trust, first steps, familiar faces. Bri shared that her baby knows exactly who Marissa is: someone who shows up.

New Staff: Brad Cairns

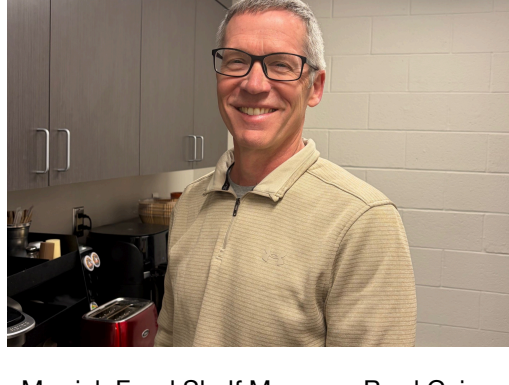
Merrick's new Food Shelf Manager, Brad Cairns, brings a rich array of experiences with him. He is the founder of Intercultural Competency consulting firm, [InterMeridian Insights, LLC](#), and an Adjunct Professor of Intercultural Studies at the University of Northwestern at St. Paul.

He has also held various leadership roles in the U.S. and Spain with [Pioneers](#), a global nonprofit. And for fun he jumpstarted a small business delivering off-road motorcycle tours in Morocco for 10 years! For the last 2 ½ years, Brad has been a front-line volunteer at [The Haven Food Pantry](#), a food bank service of Sanctuary Covenant Church in North Minneapolis.

You might be asking: why Merrick, why now?

“The thing that drew me to non-profit work all those years ago was wanting to love and serve people. Over the years I have been invited to more and more leadership positions that were great, but drew me farther away from the work that drew me to non-profit in the first place. Now, I just want to get back to loving and serving people.” - Brad

Brad is a great addition to the Merrick team and we are excited to have him!



Merrick Food Shelf Manager, Brad Cairns

Help Merrick Finish the Fiscal Year Strong

As we approach the end of our fiscal year, all of us at Merrick Community Services want to thank you for being part of a community that believes every individual and family deserves stability, dignity, and opportunity.

Still, many East Side families continue to face rising housing costs, food insecurity, and financial uncertainty. Every day, our neighbors come to Merrick seeking not only assistance – but hope.

Your year-end gift can make an immediate difference:

-A gift of \$50 can provide nutritious, culturally specific grocery items for a family in crisis.

-A gift of \$100 can cover 30 hot meals for a homebound individual.

-A gift of \$250 can help individuals access employment support and digital literacy training to set them up for success.

Your support reminds our community that no one has to face hardship alone. As our fiscal year comes to a close, we invite you to make or renew your commitment to our neighbors by making a tax-deductible contribution today.

Thank you for everything you continue to do for our community!

[Ways to Give](#)



SAVE THE DATE: Backpack Distribution



The school year is just ending but already plans are in the works for our Annual Backpack Distribution event. We look forward to celebrating our youth with a fun-filled evening at Merrick and getting them ready for school! We can use your help in a variety of ways: community partner tabling, volunteering and donations of school supplies.

If you have questions about the event you can contact Abigail Hernandez at (651) 478-1086 or ahernandez@merrickcs.org

Event Details

- **Date/Time: Thursday, August 20th @ 4:30-8:00p.m.**
- **Location: Merrick Community Services (outside in the south parking lot)**
- **The volunteer link will be posted in early July!**

Volunteer Opportunities

MCS Movie Night: Come volunteer and enjoy time with MCS participants! Hand out popcorn/hot dogs, set up, or clean up, and other duties needed.

- Thursday, June 25th, 4-8 p.m.

Garden Watering: Help us keep the MCS garden and greenhouse growing strong!

- Friday/Saturday/Sundays this summer

Interested? Contact Amy at avotel@merrickcs.org or (651) 348-6568

Dates to Remember

- **MCS Closures**
 - June 19th: Juneteenth National Independence Day— No Meals on Wheels delivery
 - July 3rd: Observance of Independence Day— No Meals on Wheels delivery
- **Backpack Distribution**
 - August 20th: Backpack Distribution for Back to School — MCS south (back) parking lot

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