

*Rachel's Light Summer 2024*

# NEWSLETTER

Rachel's Light instills faith and empowers women experiencing homelessness to become self-sufficient by utilizing a strength based approach.



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## *Executive Director's Letter / Amanda Starks*



Greetings,

It's hard to believe that we are already entering the summer months. I hope all are taking the time to enjoy the sunshine and warmth with their family and loved ones.

Rachel's Light has been continuing to move towards the opportunity of growth and expansion.

We are excited to see our vision of serving at a larger capacity and a more diverse population come into fruition. Oak Hills Community Connections is a non-profit entity that consists of a board that purchased the old Mayo building at the end of 2023. The idea behind this project was to provide comprehensive support services uniting a host of collaborative partners to work together for the benefit of those turning to this community connections center for help. Together we can all help individuals and families work toward a stable and sustainable future far better than any of us on our own. This will allow Rachel's Light to not only serve homeless women and children, but also families (husband and wife with their children), and single dads. We have seen the gaps and the increasing need, and we feel that this expansion will allow us to serve our community to the fullest as we tackle ending the cycle of homelessness for all.

We strongly believe that collaboration, partnerships, and unity will make us stronger, better, and most importantly more impactful. In May, our Celebrating Ending Homelessness One Woman at a Time event was a success. We would like to thank our guest speakers Stephanie Reidel (Board Member), Melissa Bell (Rachel's Light Housing Manager), and Michele Merxbauer (Executive Director of South Central Human Relations Center) again for being a part of our event and sharing from their hearts. We would also like to extend gratitude to all that showed their support by donating and/or attending our event. The support our community continues to show our organization has us at a loss for words, we are honored and truly grateful. Although it has been a rainy couple of months, the rain did not stop the Rachel's Ride event from having its own success. The riders and drivers made a special visit out to the shelter, where they were greeted by our residents with appreciation posters. It was a special moment for all that were involved. We would like to thank all that were involved with the success and making of Rachel's Ride. As we continue to grow in partnerships and programming we encourage you to follow us on social media, stay up to date on our website at [www.rachelslight.com](http://www.rachelslight.com), and to learn more about the plans of the creation of a collaborative environment visit [www.oakhillcc.care](http://www.oakhillcc.care). As always, thank you to all that support us as we continue to carry out our mission of ending homelessness one woman at a time.

Love & Blessings,

Amanda Starks

## Employee Spotlight: Shannon Karsten

Meet Shannon, the Community Resource Advocate at Rachel's Light:

### **What made you want to work for Rachel's Light?**

Back in 2021 I was looking for a way to get back into Social Work and it was a great way to be really present in people's lives and watch people transform. Recently I have been working more hours and in a different role. Helping assist in the day to day of the house and also developing more formal programming gets me excited about what more Rachel's Light can be to the community.

### **What was your background before you joined Rachel's Light?**

I have been married 24 years and have grown children and past foster children. My son is entering college and daughter is doing full time college/motherhood/career/getting married soon and navigating it all. Our family experience parenting has had many joys and struggles and we've learned so much about trauma, addiction, regulation, and ways to support kids the way they need at different times. I graduated from Winona State and later the University of St. Thomas with my Masters of Social Work. I have been doing full time mental health therapy for the past three years serving adults and children and am looking to merge that work and assist at Rachel's Light.

### **How would you describe the Rachel's Light environment?**

Rachel's Light home environment changes with each transition of guests in or out. It's like the dynamics of a family and the hope is when one person is struggling, others will fill in and reach out. When others are experiencing joy that creates positive vibes in the house. In general the house is a family unit that sometimes needs adjusting.

**Thank you, Shannon!**

## Upcoming Events | Save the Date!

**Open Table** Community Soup Supper - November 10th, 2024

Please note our new location this year: [NewLife Community Church](#)

160 28th Street NE Owatonna MN 55060



## Much Gratitude!

A heartfelt **Thank You** to everyone who came out to the Celebrate Ending Homelessness brunch on May 4th, 2024 and to support Rachel's Ride on June 22nd and 23rd! It was wonderful to see everyone and connect with new and familiar faces. Thank you to all the sponsors; Toreys, VFW, Kecks Repair, Open Arms Suicide Prevention, Richie Brothers, Truth, and everyone else who made each event a success. And, be sure to check out the photos from each day on page five! 💖

## Ongoing Wish List

The following items are frequently needed to keep our home running smoothly. **Contact us before you come.**

### Thank you!

Questions can be directed to [donate2rachelslight@gmail.com](mailto:donate2rachelslight@gmail.com)

Kwik Trip Gas cards	New/gently used sheet sets (twin,queen size)
Pots and Pans (new/gently used)	Clorox Wipes
Silverware, sharp knives (New gently used)	Bleach
Toothpaste (Kids/Adults)	Zip lock baggies (all sizes)
Toothbrushes (Kids/Adults)	Paper Towels
Brush/Combs (New)	Toilet Paper
Tampons	Laundry Soap
Pads	Dryer Sheets
Shavers	Toilet Bowl Cleaner
Kleenex	Floor Cleaner
Size 6 diapers	Postage Stamps
Baby Wash	Cork board (new)
Baby Lotion	3M Strips
Body Wash	Copy Paper
Fitted mattress covers New	Deodorant (mens/womens)
New Socks (Kids/Adults)	Disinfectant Cleaner
New Underwear (Kids/Adults)	Affresh washer cleaner
Printer-Ink Cartridges #952 Color #952xl Black	Clear totes w/lids (small)
Softener salt	Small lamps for bedrooms
Furnace Filters - Sz 20x25x1	13 gallon trash cans (new) and garbage bags
Small garbage cans for guest bedrooms	Full size hair shampoo and conditioner
Vacuum (NEW)	
Gift cards (Fleet Farm, Kwik Trip, Walmart, Target etc.	

## Volunteer | Ways to Support Rachel's Light | Be T.H.E. ambassador!

Want to volunteer or serve in a supporting role with the board? We're looking for communications committee members. Please contact [volunteer4rachelslight@gmail.com](mailto:volunteer4rachelslight@gmail.com)

### *Here are three ways to support Rachel's Light:*

-Enlist as a "Community Ambassador" for our Tackling Homeless for Everyone campaign (T.H.E). We're seeking 100 people to financially and publicly support us as we change the culture and stigma around housing insecurity. [More information here.](#)

-Buy a t-Shirt and/or sweatshirt from our [secure web store](#) partnership with Court Sports. Visit the website to see & shop logo adorned garments with our mission on the back.

-Visit *our website* at [www.rachelslight.com](http://www.rachelslight.com), to stay updated on all the latest events, needs, and activities in our busy home!

## Position Opening: Part-time Administrative Assistant

We have a part-time, paid position opening at Rachel's Light. This position will provide support to the Executive Director, House Manager, and the Board of Directors, on occasion. Other responsibilities are as follows:

Process mail and follow up with correspondence (written, telephone), utilize social media for marketing duties, assist with communication related tasks, and all other administrative duties as assigned.

This person must have a high level of experience/expertise with computers, excellent, articulate verbal and written communication and organizational skills, be able to take direction from others, the ability to work with people of all ages from diverse racial, cultural, religious, social and economic backgrounds and lifestyles, and the ability to make decisions in a team environment and independently. If you are interested, please send a cover letter and resume outlining your skillset to Rachel's Light at [RachelsLight55060@gmail.com](mailto:RachelsLight55060@gmail.com)



**Enjoy** snapshots from a couple of recent events where we were able to see and meet so many wonderful supporters. Thank you to all who have come out to the Celebrating Ending Homelessness One Woman at a Time and Rachel's Ride!



Make a secure donation to Rachel's Light anytime through the QR code above.

## Contact Us

Email Rachel's Light at [RachelsLight55060@gmail.com](mailto:RachelsLight55060@gmail.com) for general inquiries

Volunteer related: [Volunteer4rachelslight@gmail.com](mailto:Volunteer4rachelslight@gmail.com)

Mail: PO Box 118 Owatonna MN 55060

